

1 Corinthians

Jan Beute

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1 Corinthians - Page 19

Paul's Apostolic Authority

Divine Authority, One Church & Foolishness of the Cross

- 1:1
Paul: called apostle of Jesus Christ through God's will (not self-appointed; Acts 9).
Co-sender: Sosthenes (our brother; ex-synagogue ruler, Acts 18:17).
→ Highest authority asserted—Corinthians later questioned it.
- 1:2
To the church of God at Corinth:
 - Sanctified in Christ Jesus
 - Called saints
 - With all everywhere who call on the Lord's name
→ One church (ekklēsia = called-out assembly under Christ the King), not divided or denominational; heavenly position, future rule/glory.
- 1:3
Grace + peace from God the Father and Lord Jesus Christ.
→ New Covenant blessings: grace (empowerment) + peace (reconciliation); unites Greek/Jewish ideals in Christ the Mediator.
- 1:4–9
Thanks for God's grace given in Christ:
 - Enriched in utterance & knowledge
 - Testimony of Christ confirmed
 - Lack no gift while awaiting His return
 - God faithful to confirm blameless to the end
→ Yet this very enrichment exposes their divisions.
- 1:10–17
Warning against division:
 - Speak the same thing; no divisions; same mind & judgment (1:10)
 - Factions: "I am of Paul / Apollos / Cephas / Christ" (1:11–12)
 - Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? (1:13)
 - Paul glad he baptised almost none → baptism binds to Christ alone (1:14–16)
→ Sent to preach gospel, not with man's wisdom, lest cross be emptied (1:17)
- 1:18–25
Foolishness of the cross vs. human wisdom:
 - Cross = foolishness to perishing, power of God to saved (1:18)
 - Jews demand signs, Greeks seek wisdom (1:22)
 - Paul preaches Christ crucified: stumblingblock to Jews, foolishness to Greeks (1:23)
 - To the called: Christ = power & wisdom of God (1:24)

- God destroys worldly wisdom (1:19–20, Isa 29:14)
→ Saves by “foolishness” of preaching (1:21)
- 1:26–31
God chooses foolish/weak/base things to shame wise/mighty (1:27–28) → no flesh glories before Him (1:29)
Christ Jesus made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption (1:30)
→ “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1:31)

Paul asserts divine apostolic authority. There is one church of God—called, sanctified, united in Christ. Divisions stem from pride and preference for human leaders/wisdom. The gospel’s heart is Christ crucified—foolishness to the world, but God’s power and wisdom to believers. All boasting excluded; glory only in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 2 – Page 41

The Cross & Hidden Wisdom vs. Human Eloquence

- 2:1–5
Paul came not with excellency of speech or wisdom, but declared the mystery of God (not testimony).
Avoided Greek rhetoric → Corinthians not ready for solid food, still carnal babes needing only milk (cf. 3:1–2).
Resolved: know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified (2:2).
Came in weakness, fear, trembling → preaching in demonstration of the Spirit and power (2:3–4), so faith rests not in man’s wisdom, but in God’s power (2:5).
- 2:6–9
Among the mature Paul speaks wisdom — not of this world or its rulers (who come to nought), but God’s wisdom in a mystery (2:6–7).
Hidden wisdom ordained before the world unto our glory — God’s present work (church called while Israel set aside) between Christ’s sufferings and future glory.
Princes of this world did not know it, or they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (2:8).
Quotation: “Eye hath not seen... the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (2:9; Isa 64:4) → refers to this hidden dispensation.
- 2:10–13
God reveals them by His Spirit — the Spirit searches even the deep things of God (2:10).
Only the Spirit knows God’s things, as only a man’s spirit knows his thoughts (2:11).
We received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God, to know the things freely given us by God (2:12).
Speak not in man’s wisdom words, but in Holy Ghost words — comparing spiritual things with spiritual (2:13).
- 2:14–16
Natural (soulish) man receives not the things of the Spirit → foolishness to him, cannot know them (spiritually discerned) (2:14).

Spiritual man judges all things, yet judged by no one (2:15).

“Who hath known the mind of the Lord...? But we have the mind of Christ” (2:16).

Paul deliberately avoided human eloquence and philosophy → preached only Christ crucified because Corinthians were immature.

True wisdom is God’s hidden mystery (church’s heavenly calling & present work), revealed only by the Spirit to the mature/spiritual.

Natural man cannot grasp it; spiritual man discerns all through the mind of Christ. Very short & schematic – ready for the next chapter if you wish!3

Concise Synopsis of the Commentary on 1 Corinthians Chapter 3 Exhortation Against 1

Corinthians 3 - Page 56

Division: Carnal vs. Spiritual, Milk vs. Meat

- 3:1–2
Paul could not speak to them as spiritual but as carnal, as babes in Christ.
Fed with milk (basic principles), not meat (solid food) → still unable to bear it.
- 3:3–4
Carnality proven by envying, strife, divisions → worldly behaviour (“I am of Paul / Apollos”).
Factionalism = carnal, walking as men.
- 3:5–8
Paul & Apollos = mere ministers through whom they believed.
Paul planted, Apollos watered → God gave the increase.
Neither is anything; they are one in labour → each receives reward according to his own work.
- 3:9
Corinthians = God’s husbandry and God’s building.
- 3:10–15
Paul as wise masterbuilder laid the foundation = Jesus Christ (no other possible).
Each must take heed how he builds:
 - Gold, silver, precious stones (divine, lasting) → reward.
 - Wood, hay, stubble (human, perishable) → burned up.
The Day reveals every work by fire → suffer loss, yet saved “so as by fire” (judgment seat of Christ; concerns reward/glory, not salvation itself).
- 3:16–17
Know ye not ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit dwells in you?
If any man defiles the temple, God will destroy him → temple is holy.
- 3:18–23
Let no one deceive himself: worldly wisdom = foolishness with God (3:18–20).
Let no man glory in men (3:21).
All things (Paul, Apollos, Cephas, world, life, death, present/future) are yours → ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s (3:22–23).

Divisions reveal carnal immaturity (milk stage, clinging to human leaders).

True growth = moving to solid food (mystery of Christ’s present work & church calling).

Church = God’s temple → build with lasting (divine) materials for reward, not perishable (human) effort.

All belongs to Christ alone → no boasting in men; unity & reward come through faithfulness to God's wisdom, not worldly ways.

1 Corinthians 4 – Page 71

Warning against pride

- 4:1–2
Regard us as ministers of Christ and stewards (oikonomos) of God's mysteries (the hidden wisdom of this dispensation).
Requirement: Faithfulness to the One who appointed us.
- 4:3–5
Human (or self-) judgment is insignificant.
Paul does not even judge himself.
The Lord alone judges → wait until He comes; then every heart's counsel will be revealed, and each receives praise from God.
- 4:6–7
Do not think above what is written → no boasting or puffing up one against another.
Who makes you differ? What do you have that you did not receive?
→ All boasting is excluded.
- 4:8
Corinthians act as if already full, rich, and reigning as kings—without the apostles.
Sarcastic wish: would that you really did reign, so we might reign with you.
- 4:9–13
Contrast: apostles displayed last, as condemned to death → a spectacle to world, angels, men.
Apostles: fools, weak, despised, hungry, thirsty, naked, homeless, reviled (yet blessed), persecuted (yet endure), defamed (yet entreat) → filth and offscouring of all things.
- 4:14–17
Not written to shame, but as to beloved children.
Though many instructors, few fathers → Paul begot them through the gospel.
→ Be imitators of me.
Sent Timothy (faithful son) to remind them of Paul's ways in Christ, taught everywhere.
- 4:18–21
Some puffed up, thinking Paul will not come.
He will come (if the Lord wills) → not to hear their speech, but to see real power.
Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.
Choice: come with a rod (authority) or in love and meekness?

1 Corinthians 5 – Page 82

Immorality in the Church & Separation

- 5:1
Reported: fornication among you — such as not even named among Gentiles: a man has his father's wife (incestuous relationship).
- 5:2
Corinthians are puffed up (proud/arrogant) instead of mourning → should have removed the offender from among them.
- 5:3–5
Paul, absent in body but present in spirit, has already judged the man.
When gathered together (with Paul's spirit & Christ's power), deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.
→ Separation from fellowship/association (not loss of salvation; concerns a believer).
- 5:6–8
Glorying is not good.
A little leaven leavens the whole lump → purge out the old leaven (sin, malice, wickedness).
Christ our Passover is sacrificed → keep the feast with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (new lump, position in Christ).
- 5:9–11
Previous letter: not to company (associate closely/friendly) with fornicators.
Clarification: not meaning worldly fornicators (would require leaving the world).
But if any called a brother is a fornicator, covetous, idolater, railer, drunkard, extortioner → with such a one no not to eat (no table fellowship).
- 5:12–13
No need to judge those without (unbelievers) — God judges them.
Ye judge those within → put away from among yourselves that wicked person (remove association).

Serious immorality (incest) exists among believers → Corinthians' pride/arrogance prevents proper response (mourning & separation).

Paul judges: deliver to Satan for destruction of flesh (end of sinful life), that spirit may be saved.

Purge out leaven (sin/false teaching) → live as unleavened (holy position in Christ, Passover fulfilled).

Do not closely associate/eat with so-called brothers living in gross sin → judge those within; separate from wickedness.

Worldly sinners = God's domain; believers who persist in sin → no close fellowship.

Goal: protect holiness, preserve truth, and guard against corrupting influence — not formal excommunication, but personal/practical non-association.

1 Corinthians 6 – Page 92

Lawsuits Among Believers & Body for the Lord

- 6:1–3
Dare any of you go to law before the unjust (unbelievers) instead of the saints?

Know ye not the saints shall judge the world—and angels?

→ How much more should you judge small matters of this life yourselves!

- 6:4–6

If you have judgments of this life, set the least esteemed in the church to judge.

Shame: no wise man among you able to judge between brethren?

Instead brother goes to law with brother before unbelievers.

- 6:7–8

Utterly a fault among you that you go to law one with another.

Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?

Instead you do wrong and defraud—even your brethren.

- 6:9–11

Know ye not the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?

Lists: fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners.

Such were some of you—but ye are washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

- 6:12

All things are lawful unto me, but not all things are expedient (profitable).

All things lawful, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

- 6:13

Meats for the belly, belly for meats—but God shall destroy both.

The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

- 6:14

God raised up the Lord—and will also raise up us by His power.

- 6:15–17

Know ye not your bodies are members of Christ?

Shall I take members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? God forbid.

Joined to a harlot = one body (two become one flesh).

Joined to the Lord = one spirit.

- 6:18–20

Flee fornication. Every other sin is outside the body, but fornication sins against his own body.

Know ye not your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, of God—and ye are not your own?

Bought with a price → glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Believers must not take disputes before unbelievers—saints will judge the world/angels; settle small matters among yourselves or suffer wrong rather than defraud brethren.

All things lawful, but not all expedient—body is for the Lord, not fornication.

Bodies are members of Christ and temples of the Holy Ghost—bought with a price.

Flee fornication → glorify God in body and spirit (personal holiness, not mere avoidance of sin).

No lawsuits among saints; no defiling the temple through immorality—live as God's property, united to Christ in spirit.

Concerning Marriage & Celibacy

- 7:1
“It is good for a man not to touch a woman” — Paul’s starting point: celibacy is preferable (context of present distress, service to the Lord).
- 7:2–5
To avoid fornication, let each have his own wife/husband.
Mutual conjugal rights: do not defraud one another (except by consent for prayer/fasting), then come together again lest Satan tempt through lack of self-control.
→ Temporary abstinence possible, but not permanent; marriage protects from sin.
- 7:6–9
Advice by permission, not commandment.
Paul wishes all were as he (unmarried/celibate), but each has his own gift from God.
If they cannot contain, let them marry — better than to burn (with passion).
- 7:10–11 (to married believers)
Command of the Lord (not Paul): wife not depart from husband; husband not put away wife.
If she departs, remain unmarried or be reconciled.
- 7:12–16 (mixed marriages)
Paul’s judgment (not direct command): if unbelieving spouse pleased to dwell, do not put away/leave.
Unbeliever sanctified by believer; children holy (not unclean).
If unbeliever departs, let him depart — brother/sister not under bondage (free to remarry).
God called us to peace; uncertain whether you will save your spouse.
- 7:17–24
Abide in the calling wherein called (no need to change status: circumcised/uncircumcised, slave/free).
Keeping God’s commandments matters, not outward state.
Bought with a price → be not servants of men; serve God in present condition.
- 7:25–28
To virgins/unmarried: no commandment of the Lord, but Paul’s judgment (faithful by mercy).
Good to remain unmarried due to present distress; marriage brings trouble in the flesh — but marrying does not sin.
- 7:29–31
Time is short → married be as though they had none; weep/rejoice/buy as though not; use world as not abusing it.
Fashion of this world passes away.
- 7:32–35
Unmarried care for Lord’s things (how to please Him); married care for worldly things (how to please spouse).
Paul speaks for profit — to attend upon the Lord without distraction.
- 7:36–38 (likely self-control/virginity)
If one thinks he behaves uncomely toward his virginity (if passions arise), let him

marry — no sin.

But one steadfast, no necessity, power over own will, decrees to keep virginity — does well/better.

- 7:39–40

Wife bound while husband lives; if he dies, free to marry only in the Lord.

Happier if she abides unmarried (Paul's judgment); he thinks he has the Spirit of God.

Celibacy is good/preferable (no distraction from serving the Lord), but marriage is lawful/good to avoid fornication and passion.

Stay in present calling/status; marriage brings trouble/distraction in this distress-filled time.

All relativised: time is short; world passes; priority is pleasing the Lord without distraction.

Paul's personal preference (celibacy) is gift-based advice, not command — each has his own gift; glorify God in body/spirit.

Sexuality within marriage protects; outside is fornication; even marriage subordinate to devotion to Christ.

1 Corinthians 8 – Page 120

Things Offered to Idols: Knowledge vs. Love

- 8:1

Concerning things offered to idols:

“We know that we all have knowledge” → knowledge puffeth up, but charity (love) edifieth (builds up).

- 8:2–3

If any man thinks he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of Him.

- 8:4–6

Idols = nothing in the world; no God but one.

Though there be so-called gods (many gods & lords), to us there is but one God, the Father (of whom are all things, we in Him) and one Lord Jesus Christ (by whom are all things, we by Him).

- 8:7

Not all have that knowledge: some, with conscience (habit/custom) of the idol until now, eat it as offered to an idol → their weak conscience is defiled.

- 8:8

Meat commends us not to God: eating or not eating makes us neither better nor worse.

- 8:9–12

Take heed: this liberty of yours become not a stumblingblock to the weak.

If a weak brother sees you (with knowledge) eat in the idol's temple, his weak conscience may be emboldened to eat → weak brother perishes (suffers loss) for whom Christ died.

Sinning against brethren & wounding their weak conscience = sin against Christ.

- 8:13

If meat makes my brother offend, I will eat no flesh while the world stands, lest I make my brother offend.

Knowledge (that idols are nothing; only one God) is true but puffs up when used without love.

Love builds up the church → strong believers must limit liberty to avoid wounding weak consciences or causing stumbling.

Idols = nothing, but eating idol meat can defile a weak conscience → sin against Christ if it causes a brother to perish (lose reward/soul-salvation).

1 Corinthians 9 - Page 127

Paul's Rights & Self-Denial

- 9:1–3

Paul's defense: Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord?

→ Corinthians themselves are the seal of his apostleship (9:2).

Answer to those examining him (9:3).

- 9:4–12a

Rights affirmed:

- Power to eat/drink (9:4)
- Power to lead about a believing wife (like other apostles, brethren of the Lord, Cephas) (9:5)
- Power to forbear working (like Barnabas) (9:6)
Examples: soldier, vineyard planter, shepherd live from their labour (9:7).
Law of Moses: ox not muzzled while treading corn → applies to us (9:8–10).
Sown spiritual things → right to reap carnal things (9:11).
Others use this power over you — should we not more? (9:12a)

- 9:12b–15

We have not used this power → suffer all things lest we hinder the gospel (9:12b).

Temple ministers/altar partakers live from it (9:13).

Lord ordained: those preaching gospel live of the gospel (9:14).

Paul used none of these rights → better to die than have his glorying made void (9:15).

- 9:16–18

Preaching gospel = no ground for glorying; necessity laid on him — woe if he preaches not (9:16).

Willing → reward; unwilling → stewardship entrusted anyway (9:17).

Reward: preach gospel without charge, not abusing his power (9:18).

- 9:19–23

Free from all → made himself servant to all to gain the more (9:19).

To Jews as Jew, under law as under law (not really), without law as without law

(under Christ's law), weak as weak → all things to all men to save some (9:20–22).

Does this for gospel's sake → partaker with them (9:23).

- 9:24–27

Race analogy: all run, but one receives prize → run to obtain (9:24).

Strivers temperate in all → corruptible crown; we → incorruptible (9:25).
Paul runs not uncertainly, fights not as beating air (9:26).
Keeps under body, brings into subjection → lest after preaching to others, he himself be a castaway (9:27).

Paul defends his apostolic authority (Corinthians = proof) and asserts rights (support, wife, no labour) — yet voluntarily renounces them to avoid hindering gospel.
Preaches without charge; becomes servant to all to gain some; runs race with self-discipline for incorruptible crown.

Motivation: gospel's sake, faithfulness as steward, eternal reward — not earthly gain or human approval.

Self-denial & discipline essential; failure risks becoming castaway despite preaching to others.

1 Corinthians 10 – Page 149

Israel as Warning Example & Lord's Supper

- 10:1–4
Israel's privileges (all our fathers):
 - Under the cloud
 - Passed through the sea
 - Baptized unto Moses in cloud & sea
 - Ate same spiritual meat
 - Drank same spiritual drink from the Rock (that Rock was Christ).
- 10:5
With many of them God was not well pleased → overthrown in the wilderness.
→ Privileges do not guarantee acceptance.
- 10:6–10
These things are examples for us → not to lust after evil things as they did:
 - Idolaters (golden calf, sat down to eat & drink, rose up to play)
 - Committed fornication → 23,000 fell in one day
 - Tempted Christ → destroyed by serpents
 - Murmured → destroyed by the destroyer.
- 10:11–12
All these things happened unto them for ensamples (types) and are written for our admonition (upon whom the ends of the ages are come).
Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.
- 10:13
No temptation taken you but common to man.
God is faithful → will not allow temptation above what ye are able, but with temptation make a way to escape so ye may bear it.
- 10:14–22
Flee idolatry.
Cup we bless = communion of blood of Christ; bread we break = communion of body of Christ.
Many = one bread, one body — all partakers of one bread.
Israel after flesh: eaters of sacrifices = partakers of altar.

Gentiles sacrifice to demons (not to God) → cannot drink cup of Lord and cup of demons; cannot be partakers of Lord's table and table of demons.

Do we provoke Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

- 10:23–33

All things lawful, but not all expedient/edifying.

Seek not own profit, but another's → eat whatever sold in market, ask no questions for conscience' sake (earth is Lord's & fulness thereof).

If someone says "this is offered to idols," do not eat for his sake & conscience (not thine own, but other's).

If I by grace partake, why evil spoken of for what I give thanks?

Whether eat/drink/do anything → do all to glory of God.

Give none offence to Jews/Greeks/church of God → please all men in all things, not seeking own profit but profit of many, that they may be saved.

Israel's history (privileges yet failure through idolatry/fornication/murmuring) is a warning example → do not lust after evil things or tempt Christ.

No temptation beyond what you can bear; God provides escape.

Cannot partake of Lord's table and demons' table → flee idolatry.

All things lawful but not all edify → seek others' profit, give no offence, do all to God's glory, that many may be saved.

Priority: building up brethren, avoiding stumblingblocks, glorifying God over personal liberty.

1 Corinthians 11 – Page 190

Headship Order, Head Coverings & Lord's Supper

- 11:1

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

→ Paul as example (imitate him as he imitates Christ's self-giving service to God).

- 11:2

Praise: ye remember me in all things & keep the ordinances (traditions handed down) as delivered.

- 11:3

Headship hierarchy:

- God → Christ

- Christ → every man

- man → woman

→ Creation order of authority/responsibility (God head of Christ; Christ head of man; man head of woman).

- 11:4–7

Man praying/propheying with head covered → dishonours his Head (Christ).

Man ought not cover head: image & glory of God.

Woman praying/propheying uncovered → dishonours her head (man); equivalent to shaven (shame).

If uncovered → let her be shorn (shameful); better covered.

- 11:8–10

Man not of woman, but woman of man.

Man not created for woman, but woman for man.

Woman ought to have power (authority/sign) on head because of the angels.

- 11:11–12
Neither man without woman, nor woman without man in the Lord.
Woman of man; man by woman → all things of God.
- 11:13–16
Judge yourselves: comely for woman to pray uncovered?
Nature teaches: long hair shame to man, glory to woman (given as covering).
If contentious → no such custom in churches of God.
- 11:17–22
Gatherings not better but worse → divisions/heresies manifest approved.
Coming together not to eat Lord's Supper: each takes own supper → one hungry, another drunken.
Have ye not houses to eat/drink? Despise church of God/shame the poor? → No praise.
- 11:23–26
Received/delivered from Lord: night betrayed, took bread → "This is my body... this do in remembrance of me."
Took cup after supper → "This cup is new testament in my blood... this do... in remembrance of me."
As often as eat bread/drink cup → proclaim the Lord's death till He come.
- 11:27–32
Eat/drink unworthily → guilty of body & blood of Lord.
Examine self → eat/drink worthily (discern Lord's body = church).
Unworthily → eat/drink damnation (judgment).
Many weak/sickly; many sleep (died).
If judge self → not judged; judged → chastened of Lord (not condemned with world).
- 11:33–34
When come together to eat → tarry one for another.
If hunger → eat at home → come not together unto condemnation.
Rest I set in order when I come.

Headship order (God → Christ → man → woman) reflected in worship: man uncovered (direct to Christ), woman covered (authority of man/angels).

Divisions & selfish eating turn gatherings into condemnation → examine self, discern Lord's body (church).

Lord's Supper proclaims His death (end of old covenant, life under new) till He come.

Unworthy participation → judgment/chastening (weakness/sickness/death).

Tarry one for another → eat own supper at home; gatherings for edification, not fleshly indulgence.

Paul's authority & example: follow him as he follows Christ.

1 Corinthians 12 – Page 232

Spiritual Gifts & the Body of Christ

- 12:1
Now concerning spiritual things (not just “gifts”), brethren, I would not have you ignorant.
- 12:2–3
Ye were Gentiles, carried away unto dumb idols (led by them).
No one speaking by the Spirit calls Jesus accursed.
No one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Ghost.
- 12:4–6
Diversities of gifts — same Spirit.
Differences of administrations (ministries) — same Lord.
Diversities of operations (workings) — same God who works all in all.
- 12:7
Manifestation of the Spirit given to every man to profit withal (for edification).
- 12:8–10 (examples of gifts)
Word of wisdom; word of knowledge; faith; gifts of healing; working of miracles; prophecy; discerning of spirits; divers kinds of tongues; interpretation of tongues.
All by the one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to each severally as He wills.
- 12:11
All these work that one Spirit → diversity yet unity.
- 12:12–13
Body is one, has many members → so also is Christ.
By one Spirit all baptised into one body (Jews/Gentiles, bond/free) → all made to drink into one Spirit.
- 12:14–26
Body not one member but many.
Members cannot say “I have no need of thee” (eye/hand, head/feet).
Feebler parts necessary; less honourable parts given more honour; uncomely parts more comeliness.
God tempered the body together → no schism, members have same care one for another.
One member suffers → all suffer; one honoured → all rejoice.
- 12:27
Ye are the body of Christ, members in particular.
- 12:28
God set some in the church:
First apostles, second prophets, third teachers;
after that miracles, gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.
- 12:29–30
Are all apostles? prophets? teachers? workers of miracles?
Have all gifts of healing? speak with tongues? interpret?
→ No (diversity, not uniformity).

Spiritual things (gifts/ministries/operations) come from one Spirit/Lord/God — diverse yet unified for edification (profit).

Church = one body (Christ), many members — cannot say “I have no need of thee”; weaker parts necessary; mutual care, no schism.

All baptised by one Spirit into one body — unity transcends Jew/Gentile, bond/free.
 Gifts given severally as Spirit wills — not all have same gift; priority is building up the body, not uniformity or self-exaltation.
 Believers are members in particular — personal responsibility to use gifts for mutual edification and unity.

1 Corinthians 13 – Page 260

The More Excellent Way (Love over Gifts)

- 13:1
 Though I speak with tongues of men and angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal.
 → Impressive speech without love = empty noise.
- 13:2
 Though I have prophecy, understand all mysteries & knowledge, have all faith to remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.
 → Greatest gifts (prophecy, knowledge, faith) without love = worthless.
- 13:3
 Though I bestow all goods to feed the poor, give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits me nothing.
 → Extreme sacrifice without love = profitless.
- 13:4–7 (description of love/fruit of the Spirit in practice)
 Charity:
 - suffereth long, is kind
 - envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up
 - doth not behave unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil
 - rejoiceth not in iniquity, rejoiceth in the truth
 - beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
- 13:8–10
 Charity never faileth (eternal).
 Prophecies → shall fail; tongues → shall cease; knowledge → shall vanish away.
 We know/prophecy in part → when that which is perfect (mature/adult) is come, that which is in part shall be done away.
- 13:11
 When I was a child → spake/understood/thought as child.
 When I became a man → put away childish things.
 → Childhood (partial knowledge) ends; maturity (full) begins.
- 13:12
 Now we see through a glass darkly (enigmas/veiled) → then face to face.
 Now I know in part → then shall I know even as also I am known.
 → Partial → full knowledge; veiled → direct (mature relationship with Christ).
- 13:13
 Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three.
 But the greatest of these is charity.

Love (fruit of the Spirit) is eternal, supreme, and the more excellent way → endures forever.

Gifts (prophecy, tongues, knowledge, faith, sacrifice) are temporary, partial, and worthless without love → they fail/cease/vanish when maturity comes.

Love in practice: patient, kind, humble, selfless, truthful, enduring → bears, believes, hopes, endures all.

Childhood (partial, childish) gives way to maturity (full, face-to-face knowledge) → faith/hope abide now, but love is greatest (eternal bond/service).

Priority: pursue love above gifts; gifts serve edification but are subordinate to love's fruit.

1 Corinthians 14 – Page 279

Prophecy, Tongues, and Order in the Gathering

- 14:1
Follow after charity (love), and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.
→ Love supreme; among gifts, prophecy preferred (highest for edification).
- 14:2
He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.
→ Tongues = private communion with God (mysteries), no public benefit.
- 14:3–5
He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, exhortation, and comfort. Greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues (except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying).
→ Prophecy builds the church; uninterpreted tongues edifies only self.
- 14:6–12
If Paul comes speaking tongues → no profit unless by revelation, knowledge, prophesying, or doctrine.
Even lifeless instruments (pipe/harp) need distinction in sounds to be known.
Trumpet uncertain sound → no preparation for battle.
Tongues without understanding → speak into the air (barbarian to hearer).
→ Clarity essential; unclear speech = no message, no edification.
- 14:13–19
Let him that speaketh in tongues pray that he may interpret.
If pray in tongue → spirit prayeth, understanding unfruitful.
Paul: pray/sing with spirit and with understanding.
He thanks God he speaks tongues more than all → yet in church prefers five words with understanding to teach others than ten thousand in tongues.
→ Understanding > uninterpreted tongues (edifies others, not self).
- 14:20–25
Brethren, be not children in understanding: in malice be children, but in understanding be men.
In the law (Isaiah 28:11–12): With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; yet they will not hear.
Tongues = sign to unbelievers (not believers); prophesying = for believers.

If whole church speaks tongues → unbeliever/unlearned says ye are mad.
If all prophesy → unbeliever convicted, secrets of heart manifest → falls down, worships God, reports God is in you of a truth.
→ Tongues = sign of unbelief (Israel/Gentiles not hearing); prophecy convicts/edifies believers.

- 14:26
When ye come together: every one hath psalm, doctrine, tongue, revelation, interpretation.
Let all things be done unto edifying.
→ Gatherings for mutual building up (not chaos or self-display).
- 14:27–28
If any speak in tongue → by two or at most three, and that by course; let one interpret.
No interpreter → let him keep silence in church; speak to himself and to God.
→ Limited, orderly, interpreted (or silent in gathering).
- 14:29–33
Let prophets speak two or three; let others judge.
If anything revealed to another sitting by → first hold peace.
All may prophesy one by one → all learn, all comforted.
Spirits of prophets subject to prophets.
God not author of confusion, but of peace (as in all churches of saints).
→ Orderly, judged, one at a time; peace, not disorder.
- 14:34–35
Let your women keep silence in the churches: not permitted unto them to speak; commanded to be under obedience (as saith the law).
If learn anything → ask husbands at home: shame for women to speak in church.
→ Women silent in gatherings (ask privately; submission as per creation/law order).
- 14:36–38
What? Came word of God out from you? Or came it unto you only?
If think himself prophet/spiritual → acknowledge things Paul writes are commandments of Lord.
If ignorant → let him be ignorant.
→ Paul's teaching authoritative (not Corinthian invention; reject = ignorance).
- 14:39–40
Covet to prophesy; forbid not to speak with tongues.
Let all things be done decently and in order.
→ Desire prophecy (edifies); tongues not forbidden (but orderly/interpreted).

Love (fruit) supreme → desire spiritual gifts, but rather prophesy (edifies church).
Tongues = private (mysteries to God), sign to unbelievers (unhearing Israel/Gentiles); uninterpreted = no public edification, speak into air/madness.
Prophecy = public, edifies, exhorts, comforts believers → preferred (clear understanding).
Gatherings: orderly (few at a time, interpreted tongues, judged prophecy, women silent) → all for edification, decency, peace (not confusion).
Paul's commandments authoritative → covet prophecy; forbid not tongues (but orderly).

Priority: building up church through clear Word (prophecy > uninterpreted tongues); order, mutual edification, submission (creation/law order).

1 Corinthians 15: - Page 320

The Resurrection of the Dead as Core of the Gospel

Section 1: The Gospel Preached and Received (Verses 1–11)

- Verses 1–2: Paul declares the Gospel he preached, which they received and stand in → ongoing salvation if held fast (unless believed in vain).
- Verses 3–4: Core: Christ died for sins, buried, rose third day (according to Scriptures).
- Verses 5–8: Witnesses: Cephas (Peter), the twelve, 500+ brethren (most alive), James, all apostles, last Paul (as one born out of due time).
- Verses 9–11: Paul least apostle (persecuted church), yet by grace laboured most → same preaching as others; believed thus.
- Key Theme: Gospel = resurrection fulfilment; historical witnesses prove it.

Section 2: Consequences if No Resurrection (Verses 12–19)

- Verses 12–13: If no resurrection of dead, Christ not risen (preaching contradicts).
- Verses 14–15: Preaching/faith vain; apostles false witnesses (testified God raised Christ).
- Verses 16–18: Still in sins; fallen asleep in Christ perished (no hope).
- Verse 19: If hope only in this life, most miserable.
- Key Theme: No resurrection → vain faith, false testimony, no sin deliverance, perished believers.

Section 3: Order of Resurrection and Christ's Reign (Verses 20–28)

- Verses 20–22: Christ risen as firstfruits of slept → by man death (Adam); by man resurrection (Christ) → in Adam all die; in Christ all made alive.
- Verse 23: Order: Christ firstfruits; then Christ's at coming; then end.
- Verses 24–26: End: delivers kingdom to Father (put down all rule/authority/power) → reigns till enemies under feet (last: death).
- Verses 27–28: All under Him (except Father) → Son subject to Father (God all in all).
- Key Theme: Hierarchical resurrection (Christ, Church, end); Christ's reign subdues enemies → delivers perfected kingdom to Father.

Section 4: Practical Implications of Resurrection Hope (Verses 29–34)

- Verse 29: Why baptised for dead if no resurrection? (Figurative: pointless ritual without hope; or vicarious interpretations debated, but links to resurrection symbol).
- Verses 30–32: We/ Paul jeopardise hourly, die daily, fought beasts (figurative adversaries) Ephesus → no profit if no resurrection; eat/drink (tomorrow die).
- Verses 33–34: Not deceived: evil communications corrupt manners → awake righteously, sin not (some lack God-knowledge; to shame).

- Key Theme: Resurrection gives meaning to suffering/rituals; without it, hedonism; sin = erring from truth.

Section 5: Nature of Resurrection Body (Verses 35–49)

- Verses 35–38: How raised? What body? → Fool: sown seed dies, God gives body as pleased (every seed own body).
- Verses 39–41: All flesh differs (men/beasts/fish/birds); celestial/terrestrial glory differs; sun/moon/stars differ glory.
- Verses 42–44: Sown corruptible/dishonour/weakness/natural (soulish) body → raised incorruptible/glory/power/spiritual body.
- Verses 45–49: First Adam living soul; last Adam quickening spirit → natural first, spiritual after → earthy Adam (image borne); heavenly Christ (image to bear).
- Key Theme: Resurrection transforms (seed analogy); natural → spiritual; Adam's image → Christ's image.

Section 6: The Mystery of Change and Victory (Verses 50–58)

- Verse 50: Flesh/blood can't inherit kingdom; corruption not incorruption.
- Verses 51–52: Mystery: not all sleep, all changed → moment/twinkling eye, last trump (dead raised incorruptible; we changed).
- Verses 53–54: Corruptible/mortal put on incorruption/immortality → death swallowed in victory (Isaiah 25:8).
- Verse 55: O death/grave, where sting/victory? (Hosea 13:14).
- Verse 56: Sting of death = sin; strength of sin = law.
- Verse 57: Thanks God → victory through Lord Jesus Christ.
- Verse 58: Therefore: steadfast, unmoveable, abound in Lord's work (labour not vain).
- Key Theme: Change necessary for inheritance; victory over sin/death/law; labour rewarded.

Resurrection = Gospel essence (Christ died/buried/rose/witnessed). No resurrection → vain faith/sins remain/perished believers. Order: Christ firstfruits (raised); Church at coming (changed); end (completion/judgement). Resurrection transforms natural/corruptible body to spiritual/incorruptible (seed analogy; Adam vs. Christ). Victory over death (last enemy) through Christ → steadfast labour rewarded (not vain).

1 Corinthians 16: - Page 458

Practical Instructions, Plans, and Greetings

Section 1: The Collection for Jerusalem Saints (Verses 1–4)

- Verses 1–2: As ordered Galatian churches → first day week, lay aside as prospered (no gatherings when Paul comes).
- Verses 3–4: Approved bearers with letters → Paul may accompany if worthy.
- Key Theme: Organised giving (weekly, proportional) for needy Jerusalem believers.

Section 2: Paul's Travel Plans and Exhortations (Verses 5–14)

- Verses 5–7: Come via Macedonia → not briefly, tarry if Lord permits.
- Verses 8–9: Tarry Ephesus till Pentecost (great door open, many adversaries).
- Verses 10–11: If Timothy comes → treat without fear (works Lord's work); conduct in peace.
- Verse 12: Apollos desired → not now, but when convenient.
- Verses 13–14: Watch, stand fast faith, quit like men, strong → all in charity.
- Key Theme: Plans flexible (Lord's will); exhort to steadfastness, love.

Section 3: Recommendations and Greetings (Verses 15–24)

- Verses 15–16: Stephanas' house (Achaia firstfruits) addicted to saints' ministry → submit to such labourers.
- Verses 17–18: Glad of Stephanas/Fortunatus/Achaicus (supplied lacking) → refreshed spirits; acknowledge such.
- Verses 19–20: Asia churches salute; Aquila/Priscilla (house church) salute → brethren greet; greet with holy kiss.
- Verse 21: Paul's own hand salutation.
- Verse 22: If no love Lord Jesus → Anathema Maranatha (accursed; Lord comes).
- Verses 23–24: Grace Lord Jesus with you; Paul's love with all in Christ Jesus. Amen.
- Key Theme: Acknowledge labourers (submit); greetings, love, warning (curse if no love/serve Lord); grace/love close.

Practical organisation (collection weekly/proportional for Jerusalem); Paul's plans flexible/Ephesus focus (open door/adversaries); send/receive workers respectfully. Exhort steadfastness, manly strength, all in love. Acknowledge self-addicted ministers; greetings from Asia/Aquila-Priscilla/house church.

1 Corinthians 1:1

Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

Paul first states who he is. This is the actual letter heading, as if it were pre-printed, though of course it was not.

Paul. Now we know who is writing the letter.

Called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God. Now we know in what capacity he writes. He has been called by Jesus Christ to the apostleship.

Apostle means “sent one” or “messenger” (think of a postman), bearing a message. He has been called to that office. In the following verse we read that the Corinthians, to whom this epistle was primarily addressed, were also regarded as called—though not to apostleship, but as called saints.

Sanctification means consecration, dedication to the service of God. Naturally, the calling to apostleship implies the same. Paul was specifically called as an apostle to that service, whereas the Corinthians were called to the service of God in general—as indeed applies to all believers. This is a central theme in both epistles to the Corinthians. We are not merely redeemed, but called out of the world—which lies under the power and dominion of the devil—in order to serve God. We have also been made competent for this (2 Corinthians 3:6 “Who also hath made us able ministers of the

new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”).

Paul, then, has been called by Jesus Christ. We know this from the account in Acts 9, when Paul (who was then still called Saul) was on his way to Damascus and was called by the Lord.

He is not merely an apostle, but a called apostle—and that by the will of God. With this he excuses himself in advance for what he is about to do: namely, write a letter, and then another one. At this point the excuse is not yet fully understandable, but it becomes so later, for it turns out that Paul’s apostolic authority was being questioned by the Corinthians. They simply did not want him. He had preached the gospel to them, but afterwards he was supposed to clear off, because they did not like what else he had to say. They probably cried out: “Give us the simple gospel; that’s enough for us. Let’s just stay close to the cross.” That makes sense, for they did not want what follows upon the cross, and besides, they had never truly grasped the cross. After twenty chapters Paul still has to write that if One died for all, then he reckons that all died—leaving open what the Corinthians themselves thought about it, for they still had not understood. If the Lord Jesus died for us, then we have died and lost our earthly citizenship and all that goes with it. Then we are dead. We have died to the world, died to sin, and died to the law. Those expressions come from the previous epistle. Yet the Corinthians did not want to hear what Paul had to tell them.

Paul legitimises himself by saying that he is an apostle, moreover a called one, and that by the will of God. You cannot have a higher authority than that. The question remains whether the Corinthians allowed themselves to be convinced by it. There are cultures that accept no authority at all. In the Netherlands, authority has long since been abolished. The Corinthians did not acknowledge the authority of the Word of God, and therefore not that of the apostle Paul either. That made it very difficult for him to instruct those Corinthians.

The co-sender of the letter is Sosthenes. He is our brother. That word is sometimes used at a higher level, in the sense of fellow-worker, fellow-labourer, and thus co-responsible. Perhaps he had rather more influence with the Corinthians. We do not know a great deal about Sosthenes. In Acts 18 a verse is devoted to him.

Paul had first been in Athens, where he preached on the Areopagus. From there he came to Corinth. In those days there was also a philosophical school there, just as in Athens. Corinth was a port and commercial city. He preached the gospel there too. He reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath and persuaded Jews and Greeks. He stirred them up. He set them thinking.

Acts 18:5

And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

They arrived somewhat later, for Paul had left them in Berea; from there he had travelled alone first to Athens and then alone to Corinth. Silas and Timotheus now rejoined Paul. Then Paul was pressed in the spirit and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. That is what one must always do when bringing the gospel to religious Jews. One must show them from Moses and all the prophets that the Christ had to suffer first, and then enter into His glory (Luke 24:25–26; 1 Peter 1:11). The Christ would first suffer and only afterwards be glorified. That is missing from Jewish Messianic expectation. At best, they expect a Messiah who will build His kingdom, restore the throne of David, and deliver

Israel from the Gentiles. That the same Messiah must first suffer and die escaped them. That must therefore first be demonstrated from the Scriptures. It then appears that what the Scriptures say about it fits perfectly with the person of Jesus of Nazareth. And so one tells them that Jesus is the Christ.

The Jews now know roughly how things stand and absolutely do not want to hear that the Christ had to suffer first. If they accept that, then they are no longer Jews.

This is undoubtedly what Paul did. He preached to the Jews from the Scriptures that the Christ had to suffer first and then receive glory. He did not preach this only here, for in Acts 13 we already read the same things. He preached in the synagogue without mentioning the name of Jesus, for it is not so much about the name of Jesus, but about the Christ of the Scriptures. How is He described in the Scriptures? One must first know that, and then one can apply it to the Lord Jesus and make clear that it all refers to Him. He first teaches how it is with the Christ. That is enough to stir the Jews and Greeks. Then he waits for Silas and Timotheus until they are present, and then he testifies to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. After that they need know no more.

Acts 18:8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

Then a riot arises, instigated by the Jews. They bring Paul before Gallio, before the judgment seat of the deputy in Achaia. Gallio takes no notice and wishes not to meddle in the religious affairs of the Jews. They can sort it out themselves.

Acts 18:16-17

And he drave them from the judgment seat.

17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

This is the Sosthenes our brother of 1 Corinthians 1:1.

Apparently there were two chief rulers of the synagogue: first Crispus, and then Sosthenes. Of Crispus we read in Acts 18:8 that he came to faith. In verse 17 Sosthenes evidently had not yet come to faith, but was involved in the uprising against Paul, Silas, and Timotheus. Sosthenes therefore gets a beating from the Greeks. Later he evidently came to faith, for here in 1 Corinthians 1:1 he is called our brother. He perhaps travelled with Paul to Ephesus, or followed him later. At any rate, we now know that two chief rulers of the synagogue came to faith. The rulers of the synagogue are assumed to stand somewhat closer to the Scriptures than ordinary people. If they are sincere, and Paul comes with his background as a Pharisee—moreover taught by Gamaliel—and explains how it is with the Christ, that He had first to suffer and then enter into glory, then that probably had impact.

In the law of Moses the Lord says: “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.” We have turned that into “thou shalt not swear,” but that is probably the least serious thing one can do with the name of God. It is far worse when one uses the name of God for one’s own idol, as Israel did with the golden calf, for example. Even stronger: while Moses was on the mountain fetching the stone tablets on which those words were supposed to stand, the people below were making their own god, led by the priests and even by the high priest. Aaron made that idol and called him Jehovah. He made the golden calf and said: “Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. Tomorrow shall be a feast to Jehovah.” But it was an idol about whom Aaron said this. The good names were used, but the content was wrong.

It seems that those people who insist we must not swear perhaps themselves use the name of God in vain within their religious context. Is the God they serve the God of the Bible, or have they invented Him themselves? Unbelievers always know very well how to point out that that god is self-invented. In many cases they may even be right. They are the names from the Bible, but is it also the God of the Bible?

If those people moreover think that the God of the Bible is the same as Allah, then their god is probably the same as Allah, but not the One of the Bible.

In Petra there once stood a nailed-up sign with the text: Not God, but Allah. Then one comes to the Netherlands and here they say it is all the same. Well, the people there in Petra know better. The people here who think so are probably right, but it is simply not from the Bible. That is a god they have invented themselves, to whom they give the biblical names, but they then use those names in vain. That is empty—God is not in it. And when the Antichrist comes later, they will think he is the Christ. They have the wrong one.

One wonders what Sosthenes—for that is what we were talking about—is doing here in 1 Corinthians 1:1. We conclude from this that the second chief ruler of the synagogue also came to faith. Perhaps, because of his former position, he had rather more authority than Paul. That could be a reason to mention his name as co-sender. Perhaps they would listen to him. At any rate, one may assume that he had much knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, and with that one gets a long way.

1 Corinthians 1:2

Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's:

What does he say? That the church is one, and that there is no such thing as a church here and a church there, nor different churches under different names. There is but one church, and it is not ours, but God's. It is after all the church of God. Naturally, the letter is brought to Corinth, but the content is not limited to the Corinthians; it applies to everyone and is intended for everyone.

The church of God is also called: sanctified in Christ Jesus, or: the called saints, and once more: together with all who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, wherever they may be. Someone with a bit of Jewish or Hebrew background recognises the expression “who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Perhaps not Jesus, but calling upon the name—because in the Old Testament it is repeatedly said that whoever calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved. It therefore means: together with all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

All these expressions are naturally used to indicate what the church really is. The church is not in the world, nor does it belong there. The church is also not a sect, not a world religion, but the church of God. The believers have been sanctified by God and called by Him. That amounts to much the same thing in a high degree. Called, namely, to serve Him, but also sanctified to serve Him.

We need to have explained to us what the church is. The word “church” (gemeente) has been taken over from Martin Luther, who translated the Bible into German. His friends had “kidnapped” him because they thought he was not safe on the journey after he had appeared before the Diet and been placed under the ban of the empire. He had received safe conduct, but his friends did not quite trust it. So they kidnapped him and took him

to Wartburg Castle near Eisenach in Thuringia, where he lived incognito as “Junker Jörg” for almost a year and translated the New Testament from Latin into German. He found it difficult to translate the word for church with “Kirche,” because there was only one church, namely the Roman Catholic one. That was his great opponent, so that translation did not seem suitable to him. He interpreted the expression as a community, a unity, and so he translated it as “Gemeinde.” In that becomes “gemeente.” The word “gemeente” expresses fellowship, of people who are one together.

The actual Greek word is ecclesia. The Corinthians must have known that word very well, as did all Greek-speaking people in those days. The ecclesia was part of the government. Those Greek city-states were democratic. They had a popular assembly called the ecclesia. That immediately shows how it works. The church is namely called to glory and called to inherit the kingdom together with Christ the King.

The ecclesia was an assembly of people from the people, but originally the ecclesia consisted of people appointed from above, by the king. That is how it used to be in the Netherlands too. The people chosen by the king to assist him in governing the country were raised to the nobility. Thorbecke abolished that again. Before that, the French Revolution had already done considerable damage in that respect. No more nobility, no more high-born people: Liberté, égalité, fraternité = freedom, equality, and brotherhood. Most of the nobility were then beheaded

Nevertheless, it is an ancient principle. If a king is wise, he listens to his people and therefore appoints people from the people as representatives. Later they were elected by the people. The ecclesia was the judicial assembly. That roughly corresponds to our Supreme Court. They were responsible for upholding the laws of the kingdom. It was in fact the exercise of the king’s authority, whose servants they therefore were. They had been called to that out of the people.

Ek = out;

klesia = kaleo = to call.

So, called-out ones. In practice, however, it is the designation of the popular assembly and part of the authority, of the government, but under the king. That is how the Corinthians must have understood it too.

In addition, it is also a Hebrew and Old Testament word, namely qahal, the congregation, Israel, sometimes translated as the whole assembly.

The same line of thought applies to Israel, for Israel is called out from the nations, a royal people that will share in the rule of Christ in the days of His kingdom on earth. The difference between Israel and the church is that Israel is called to an earthly position and the church to a heavenly position.

The Dutch word “kerk” (church) is not in itself a wrong translation (kuriakos).

Kos = oikos = house.

Kuria comes from kurios = lord.

So, house of the Lord.

Nowadays people speak of Jewish churches, Mohammedan churches, Buddhist churches, but those are certainly not of the Lord. One should therefore not call them churches either, but nowadays no one knows what those words mean any more.

The church of God = those called out by God Himself, placed in an honourable position.

The church of God which is at Corinth. If they are called-out ones, then they are sanctified, then they are consecrated to the service of God. They are that in Christ Jesus, because of their union with Christ. In the first place Christ Himself will judge. For

the Father has committed all judgment to the Son (John 5). "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28). God will judge the whole world by one Man whom He has raised from the dead for that purpose (Acts 17).

Christ is the highest judicial authority, whereas we thought the highest judicial authority was the ecclesia. That is so too, for we shall be involved in that judgment in the future. That is because we belong to that body. The ecclesia is a body. We have part in Christ. He is the great Judge, and therefore the ecclesia that is in Christ is the judicial assembly. That judgment takes place in the service of God, together with Christ Jesus, and therefore we are called saints in Christ Jesus.

Another term for that is "sons." It seems that expression is avoided here, but it is at least suggested in the expression "called saints," for in general believers are called to sonship. We were predestined to sonship beforehand. The son is the responsible one, the one who receives the responsibility, namely the birthright, which may include kingship and priesthood.

The sons are also the elders. That was so in Israel, and the same applies exactly to the church. We are called to sonship, to inheritance, and thus to kingship. Made by Christ kings and priests unto God and His Father (Revelation 1:6). These things are not described at length, but they are named in these expressions. It is explicitly stated that the church is the church of God and consists of those consecrated to the service of God, who have been called by God out of the world to enter that popular assembly which will be glorified with Him in the future. Those people are not found only in Corinth, but also beyond it.

It is then quickly established that the church in Corinth was divided into all sorts of different groups. According to Paul that cannot be, because there is but one church. It therefore cannot be divided into all sorts of groups. Moreover, the whole church in Corinth is not the whole group, for there are also believers in every place. There are yet more who call upon the name of the Lord, wherever in the world. They all belong to that one ecclesia: the one holy catholic Christian church.

1 Corinthians 1:3

Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

If it had been purely Greek, it would have been 'Grace be unto you'. That is how the Greeks greeted one another. They wished each other charis = grace. One should not take it too literally, or one might feel offended. After all, grace is only for condemned people. One must take it broadly: grace, favour, prosperity. If it had been purely Hebrew, it would have been 'peace be unto you'. That was the usual Jewish greeting, drawn from the Old Testament, where peace is proclaimed. That is the peace of the New Covenant. That Covenant is announced in the Old Testament. The King of that Covenant is called the Prince of Peace. The type of it, Melchizedek, is called king of peace, king of Salem (Hebrews 7:2). That is why the Jews greet one another with 'peace', but one of the prophets said: "Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar" (Ezekiel 13:10). Grace and peace are, in the Bible, characteristic of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant is law and therefore condemnation; the New Covenant is by definition grace. Sometimes only 'grace' is mentioned, though what is

meant is the Covenant of grace. The New Covenant is also called the Covenant of peace, the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).

Paul is therefore saying that the New Covenant has arrived and is being preached. The ideal of the Greeks and the ideal of the Jews come together in the New Covenant, in which there is no difference between Jew and Greek. Or they come together in the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. Both traditions are linked together.

Grace and peace do not exist unless they come from God. Grace does not apply where law reigns. Where law reigns, grace is therefore subordinate. A covenant theologian had discovered that there was also grace under the law, but that is not the point. It is not about whether grace exists, but whether grace reigns. Under the New Covenant, it is not law that reigns, but grace; and grace is therefore also the basis of Christian ethics.

Grace is the starting principle of our practical life. Grace, and thus forgiveness. That brings peace. Grace means the end of the struggle, for under the law it is always war. Under the New Covenant those things have been taken away. Among men there is no grace and peace, but with God there is. That is why one should call upon His Name.¹⁵ We are born of Him. We are His children and moreover His heirs, for if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together (Romans 8:17).

The Father is the giver and the Son is the receiver. Father and son do not necessarily involve procreation. That is included, but it is not the true meaning of the term. That the giver gives to that which descends from him is obvious. Therefore the children were predestined unto the adoption of sons. However, if Tubal-cain is the father of all smiths, that has nothing to do with descent. It has to do with a certain skill that is passed on. The father hands it over to whoever it may be, but whoever it is, is the son. The Lord Jesus says to the Jews: 'Ye are of your father the devil'. Why? Because they lie, and the devil is the father of the lie, the liar from the beginning.

If God is therefore our Father, then He is indeed the One from whom we are born, but more particularly He is the One who blesses us. For he hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). That is why He is also called the Father of glory, because we receive that glory from Him. He is the Giver and He gives on the basis of grace.

No one comes to the Father except through Jesus Christ. He is the Mediator between God and men. God gave the Spirit to the Lord Jesus Christ, who as a result rose from the dead, for the Spirit is life. He, in turn, hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear (Acts 2:33). That is to say, God gives it to the Son and the Son gives it to us.

We also receive grace and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ. Everything that God gives, He gives to His Son (singular) and the Son gives it to us. God Himself is the Source and Christ is the Mediator. From our perspective, Christ is the Source.

1 Corinthians 1:4

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;

Here too Paul anticipates what comes later, the divisions that exist in the church. For the grace of God has been given to them in Christ Jesus. The saving grace of God has appeared to all men, but here it is not about its appearing, but about its being accepted. Through that grace of God they have also become rich, but not in material terms.

1 Corinthians 1:5

That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;¹⁶ They have become rich in all utterance and knowledge.

Utterance = logos = word. It has to do with what can be expressed in words and thus with doctrine.

In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). If you have treasures, then you are rich. All those treasures of knowledge and wisdom are hidden in Christ. Outside Him there is nothing.

It is not about the outward man, but about the inward man. He is not material, but spiritual. The greatest possession a man can have is knowledge. That is still true today, even though it does not always seem so.

Everything we possess in material terms we can lose just like that. A shroud has no pockets. A man brought nothing into the world at birth, and when he leaves he can take nothing with him. The only thing he can take is knowledge. What we have learned here, we have learned forever and take with us. If we ever become demented, the memory will surely return once we are freed from this earthly body. Our thinking is not dependent on our body. That is the misunderstanding of the materialistic biologist. He thinks that everything that happens in man happens, and possibly in his brain. That is doubtful. It is not something of the flesh. It is a higher matter.

One does not lose it. The only real possession is what he has learned. Not only what you have stored in memory, but also what you have learned in the practice of life. That is why we as children of God are here. We no longer really belong here since we came to faith, but we are here so that we might learn certain things. We shall need them in the future. The goal is therefore that we come to the knowledge of Christ. Thereby we come to the knowledge of God, for Christ is the revelation of the Godhead. We come not only to the knowledge of who He is, but also to the knowledge of His work. We shall be involved in that. Already now, but certainly in the future.

We were to become rich in all utterance and knowledge. Some are surprised that so much attention was given to philosophy in antiquity, but that is not so strange. That is exactly what it is about. That one learns what purpose this world has and what we must do here. They simply did not want to listen to the Creator and therefore had to develop their own ideas about it. That is why philosophy is viewed negatively in the Bible. It is falsely so called science, because it reasons independently of the Word of God, from man. But we should listen to God's reasonings and make them our own, both doctrinally and in practice. Those two should go together.

It was not that the Corinthians had all utterance and knowledge, but they had access to it. It was available in their midst. Whether they wanted to listen to it and be taught by it is another question. The thought corresponds to the First Epistle of John, where John says: But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him (1 John 2:27).

If having knowledge means having access to knowledge, it can also mean, for example, that one does not have the knowledge ready to hand, but has it standing in the bookcase. If you do not use that book, then in practice you have nothing of that knowledge.

We should seek the knowledge and wisdom in Christ, for in Him lie all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom. Have we then received that knowledge? Yes, it is all in the Bible. That this is the thrust of this verse is clear, for it also appears that the Corinthians in practice had learned little. They had access to the knowledge, but did not avail themselves of it.

That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; How so? Well...

1 Corinthians 1:6

Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you; They knew Christ, they knew the Gospel, they had come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and therefore had access to that knowledge. They too had received the Spirit, who would lead them into all truth. That is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation and of the knowledge of Christ (Ephesians 1:17).

1 Corinthians 1:7

So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. That last refers of course to His return, for that is where we as believers are heading. That is the fulfilment of our calling. On the way there God has given gifts to the church. They are called gifts because God has given them. One does not yet know what has been given. God has given each of us a certain work. He has given us something to do, within the unity of the church. The unity of the church can also be called a body. In English that also applies, for a body is a composite unity, a unity of many. The many members of the body, however, do not all have the same function. Paul says that as an explanation of the concept 'gift'. The problem attached to it is that people have made of the concept 'gift' something for which one has had to make no effort at all, except perhaps having hands laid on one, or being allowed to fall backwards or forwards. People think that it then concerns so-called miraculous gifts. They understand it to mean that one can suddenly do something one could not do before. Preferably something that is also impressive.

By biblical standards, gifts are certain responsibilities within the church. That can be anything. That is why they are generally not named. There are a few that are named, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. There are also miraculous gifts, such as speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, the gift of healing. In practice it appears that people understand 'gift' only as those miraculous things and nothing else. But according to this same epistle, these miraculous gifts are not intended for us and are therefore not given to us, simply because they had a function in history, but no longer today. Those who think they have such gifts naturally do not agree. But well, if it is in the Bible and you do not agree with it, then there is nothing for it but to fight it out with God.

Gifts have to do with what we often also receive in normal life, namely a job. You get something to do and you get it as a gift. Well, you do not get it just like that, you must be competent for it. 2 Corinthians 3 says that our sufficiency is of God, who has made us able ministers of the new testament. Furthermore, gifts are given according to what someone can bear. That is called ability in the Bible. God does not give you something under which you collapse. That is also true in normal life. An employer will not readily give you a job you cannot handle. Otherwise he has a problem.

The Corinthians have therefore received gifts. Do they know that? Perhaps not, but that does not matter much. God has a career for every believer. You get it. It is part of the package. You come to faith and receive from God regeneration, a new life and with it a career. At that moment you may not yet be able to walk, but that will come later. You must first learn to stand and hold your ground, to stand firm, and then you also walk on the career. For it is there. There are no body parts without function. You receive that function. That is grace and that function is therefore called a gift.

That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:8

Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:9

God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Corinthians first heard the Gospel through the apostle Paul, but afterwards much happened and much would still happen. From the content of the epistle it appears that this letter was probably not written immediately after his departure from Corinth, for how could so much disagreement have arisen in the church in such a short time? As already said, we simply do not know when Paul wrote these letters. We should therefore draw no conclusions from it.

Warning against division

1 Corinthians 1:10

But I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Paul no longer really knows who he did and did not baptise. At any rate, he had baptised a few, but attached absolutely no value to it. John the Baptist also baptised, as did the Lord Jesus, although He did not baptise Himself. One baptises in the name of... in that the baptiser himself is not important. One does it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. One must do it, because one has been asked to. Paul had baptised only Crispus and Gaius and, oh yes, also the household of Stephanas. For the rest he has no idea whether he baptised anyone else. Whether he baptised people or not, they were not thereby bound to him. And if Peter had also baptised there, then those people were not bound to Peter either. One comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptised in His name and is united with the living Christ.

Paul is concerned because this church in Corinth is divided into different denominations associating themselves with different preachers. They identified themselves with them. If you ask people about their faith, they usually tell you which denomination they belong to, as if that says something about their personal faith. Sometimes they also mention the name of a person. In the Netherlands that does not happen so much. Then there is a category that says they belong nowhere, because they are of Christ. That is not entirely correct either, for we do have to do with the church. We

are part of one holy catholic Christian church. We should not divide into parties, nor join them, nor set ourselves against them. We are children of God and therefore belong to that one church. That is discussed at length later, for it is precisely in this epistle that the church as the body of Christ is discussed at length, and that we have all been baptised by one Spirit into one body. In that body there are indeed different members, which do not all have the same function, but they do belong to that one body. If they then call themselves by someone's name, they withdraw from that body.

Paul had therefore heard of those divisions, and that was reason for him to write a letter about it immediately. He mentions it here first, then lets it go again for the moment, seems to return to it briefly in chapter 3; then many chapters later, in which he speaks about the unity of the church. In the earlier chapters he writes about what evidently divides believers in practice. If one sees Christianity as a world religion, one remains stuck in those sorts of things. We, however, have been delivered from that. The world is characterised by division, but we who are part of a new creation are one in Christ. The problem is that we ourselves are first inclined to deny that, and then take measures to become one anyway, supposedly because we must. We do not have to become one, but we are one. We should acknowledge the unity we have in Christ. Everything we do that brings division is essentially un-biblical. The work of Christ is that He makes us one and that we function as a unity. Everything that brings division is in fact antichristian. That is what this epistle is about.

They should be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. What that mind should be you can read, for example, in Philippians, where it says: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5). That is a mind of servanthood.

1 Corinthians 1:11

For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

Paul knows about these divisions because those of the household of Chloe have told him. This was probably a group of believers who met in the home of Chloe. That people gather in different places is not in itself division. It has, of course, mainly a practical reason. It was the same in Rome: a large city with various district congregations. One does not therefore need to have different mindsets. Literal church walls do not separate us. When we speak of "church walls," we usually do not mean literal ones anyway. But the different denominations expressed in those different walls do bring division.

Schism = division.

It is not pleasant to talk about it. It ought not to be so. After all, we are one in Christ. There are only two kinds of people: believers and unbelievers. If we are believers, we form a unity. We call that the ecclesia, the church. We should love one another, care for one another. Together we grow in knowledge and faith, and together we are on the way to the glory that shall be revealed to us. Everything else plays no significant role. It must not be this way or that way. That sort of thing belongs in the world. But surely one must be organised? Not at all. One does not need to organise a body, because a body is already organised. God assigns to each one his function and thus his place in that body. If we think we must organise everything in the church, there is a great risk that we shall stand in the way of God's own organisation. If the Bible teaches that all believers are priests, and a denomination appoints priests, then one has trampled that whole biblical

truth underfoot. People do not want all believers to be priests. Sometimes with the best intentions they do not, because they consider them not competent enough, but the Bible says that God has made us competent for it.

Our new birth results in our being priests. If people cannot live with that, they reverse it and appoint priests, so that anyone not appointed is apparently not a priest. Yet we are all priests and bear that responsibility personally towards the Lord. If someone starts organising it, then responsibility shifts towards the organisation and no longer towards the Lord. That is how Christendom has always done it. There has always been the conflict between what the Bible wants and what the organisation wants.

1 Corinthians 1:12

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;

15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.

16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

This naturally has a historical background, first of all in Acts 18, where we find this history. It also immediately sheds light on how the epistle continues.

Acts 18:1 -3

After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.

3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

Aquila and Priscilla were believers, and from their house Paul preached the gospel in Corinth, with some result. People came to faith, but immediately a riot arose in the city, caused by the Jews, against the preaching of the gospel. Paul is dragged before the court.

Acts 18:12

And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,

13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

14 And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.

16 And he drave them from the judgment seat.

17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

You can picture it. They started fighting in front of the judgment seat. That court was public, in the marketplace, for that is where such trials took place. Gallio took no notice.

Paul then disappears from this turbulent city. (To “live like a Corinthian” was a saying. There were many prostitutes there, and they were not cheap.) Acts 18:18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow. 19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

Paul eventually left Corinth behind. Corinth was a city of tumult, with factions making life difficult for one another. That carried over into the church. Here we first meet Apollos.

Acts 18:24

And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

He was mighty in the Scriptures, but those were the Old Testament Scriptures. Of New Testament matters he had not yet understood very much.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

More perfectly = more accurately, more precisely.

27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ

Paul goes to Ephesus and then disappears from Ephesus again. Then this Apollos comes to Ephesus and preaches the gospel from the Old Testament. He preaches that Jesus is the Christ. Which Christ? He is the One whose coming is announced in detail in the Old Testament. One must first get a picture from the Old Testament of what or who that is. Then one can say that Jesus is that Christ. That is how the Lord Jesus Himself asked His contemporaries who that Christ is, whose Son He is. He did not ask, “Who am I?” On another occasion He asks:

“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? ...

But whom say ye that I am?”

To which Peter replies: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Nevertheless, the idea of Christ, of the Messiah, is taken from the Old Testament. That Jews do not see Jesus as the Messiah is because they do not know their own Old Testament. People think Jews know the Old Testament from cover to cover. That is rather like Christians who say they believe the whole Bible and think they know the whole Bible. Would that it were so. It is not, and most have no interest in it at all. The same applies just as much to Islam. Those people do not know their holy books. Some know a little, as it suits them and fits their views. So it is with the Jews too. But the Christ? The Old Testament teaches that the Christ would first suffer and so enter into His glory. That is completely unknown to them. They do not want to hear it either, because then they would immediately understand that Jesus really is the Christ. They were slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. It is exactly the same in Christendom. People

may still be inclined to believe that He has made atonement for our sins, but that we are thereby freed from the dominion of the law, they will not accept—any more than that He will one day in the future set His feet on the Mount of Olives, establish His throne in Jerusalem, and gather all nations before Him to reign over them in this old world. That is described at length in the Old Testament, and even more fully how it will come about. It must all still happen, but people do not know it.

Apollos is in Ephesus and is corrected by Aquila and Priscilla; he disappears from Ephesus and travels to Corinth. It says here that he helped greatly those who had believed through grace. Apparently the believers in Corinth saw Paul differently from Apollos. It is not stated explicitly, but it strongly appears that Apollos did not let himself be taught here and therefore left Ephesus for Corinth. There he will undoubtedly have preached the gospel that Jesus is the Christ and that one is saved by faith in Him. But then what? That is the point. What comes next once one has come to faith? Then one becomes part of that one holy catholic Christian church and part of the body of Christ; one no longer belongs to the world and now has responsibility within the church; one grows towards an inheritance reserved in heaven. That inheritance consists of priesthood, but also of kingship. These are things many believers today have never heard of. That is because they hope the Lord will pay some attention to their own problems and hope the Lord can add His strength to our weakness—in our social, cultural, and not least family and married life. The Christian bookshops are full of books about how we should fill our Christian lives.

In the Old Testament we find promises, also summed up in one promise. For all those promises surely come together in that one: that they are all fulfilled in Christ. It was about the coming of the Messiah and thus the fulfilment of the promises. That is the category of Apollos: mighty in the Scriptures. The point is that with the coming of Christ the New Covenant arrived, and then history more or less repeats itself. After that we live under the New Covenant. Moreover, the New Covenant has promises made to us again. That is why the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of better promises, confirmed in a better covenant. In the Old Covenant there are promises made to Israel that they would have the birthright above the nations, but since the coming of the Messiah Israel as a people has been set aside, and God is gathering a church that was hidden in the Old Testament. What now of Apollos? What are we to do with that church? That is probably what Aquila and Priscilla explained to Apollos. In all likelihood Apollos preached a simple message in Corinth, whereas Paul had far more to say. At any rate, Aquila and Priscilla were evidently aware of this and explained it to Apollos.

Paul therefore immediately speaks of the divisions that evidently exist in Corinth. He returns to it in 3:3. In the meantime he suddenly brings in quite a different subject, apparently. He then speaks of the gospel that is supposed to be the foolishness of God. Yet it is the wisdom of God, but in the eyes of men foolishness. What has wisdom and foolishness suddenly to do with divisions? The Greeks want philosophy, wisdom, but instead they get a simple message that teaches one is justified from sin by the death of the Lord Jesus and receives eternal life by His resurrection, and moreover stands outside the world. That is preaching completely detached from and passing by all human wisdom.

One person wants to hear something about the prophetic word, about the future; another wants something about the past. That need do no harm in one's personal life.

Then there are also those who like a practical message, or people who, as soon as they suspect a practical message is about to be preached, stay away.

The Corinthians had a bad reputation. Among the believers there were undoubtedly some who came from the philosophers' schools. Those were the scientists of those days. But there will also have been harbour workers among them. Nothing derogatory is meant by that, but they were clearly different social classes. And so one person wants this and another that. A certain preacher suits one class better, another suits the other, and so different denominations arise very quickly. That happened in Corinth, and that is the background of this epistle. That is why Paul immediately begins to speak about the wisdom of the world.

They were confronted with the wisdom of God, and the question was whether they would accept it. Whether the wise men there were also willing to accept the wisdom of God. There will also have been a category who had no time for wisdom at all, and then the question arises again whether they were willing to accept the wisdom of God. The wise of the world regard the wisdom of God as foolishness. Perhaps then the unwise swallow the wisdom of God, but that did not happen either. On the contrary, they remained stuck at the cross. They did not advance a single step, for the simple reason that they did not want to accept the consequences. That seems to happen often enough in our days too. There is a good chance that those who cry that we must stay close to the cross have never truly accepted that cross. Accepting the cross of Christ means accepting that you have died to sin, to the law, and to the world. For you have died with Christ and laid down all your earthly rights and duties. And that is still the negative message. The positive message comes afterwards and is fixed in the resurrection of Christ: that we have been made alive in Christ and become firstfruits of a new creation; that we are part of the church of the firstborn and for that reason are expected to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, worthy of the gospel, worthy of God, and worthy of the Lord. That is positive, but if one does not want that last part, then one gets a certain club, a certain grouping. They certainly have their own "guru".

All discussion about whether the Bible teaches this or that usually has nothing to do with the Bible and does not arise from interest in the Bible, but from one's own interests. People try to make the Bible subordinate to their own interests, or try to escape what the Bible actually says. They call the Scripture into question. As long as there is discussion about it, there is doubt, and one is under no obligation. A great deal of Bible study is of that nature. That is to say, completely non-committal and intended to remain so. If it is certain what the Bible teaches, then one must bear the consequences. Many things that are disputed in Christendom are not disputed in the Bible at all. There is no reason for discussion about them, except when people have a double agenda. What the Bible itself teaches is generally clear enough.

Paul therefore has the problem that they do not want him, nor his message. They choose someone else who preaches a different message. That is apparently, on the one hand, Apollos and, on the other hand, possibly also Cephas. That is Peter. Paul does not use that name (though the same word, but in Aramaic). When he returns to the same list in chapter 3, he does not mention Peter at all. Apparently Peter too was pressed into such a role, and his popularity may have something to do with his Jewish background, with which he had at least some difficulty for a time. A preacher who is at least somewhat legally minded is naturally open to the Jews.

The wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world

1 Corinthians 1:17

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

For Christ sent me not to baptize. You must not stop reading there, or you get endless discussions about baptism. That Paul did not baptize at all and that baptism is not applicable to us, and so on. Christ did not send him to baptize, but to preach the gospel. When people accept the gospel, they are baptised. It is not about baptism, but about faith in the gospel, which in Romans 1:16 is called the power of God unto salvation.

He does not do it with wisdom of words. It is not philosophy.

1 Corinthians 1:18

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

The preaching of the cross is therefore indeed gospel. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God (v. 24). But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory (2:7).

The gospel is not foolishness, but foolishness to those who will not accept it. Perhaps they regard it as foolishness because they apply human standards. Human standards always concern life: how life can or should be developed. The preaching of the gospel is the opposite. The gospel proclaims that God has put an end to that life and that, at any rate for God, it no longer counts. One died for all, therefore all died. That is what it keeps coming back to. People do not want to accept that they have died to sin, to the law, and to the world. They regard that as foolishness, but it is the wisdom of God. The world regards it as foolishness that Jesus of Nazareth—if He even lived and to the extent one cannot deny His existence in the past—did what He did and ended up on the cross. They find that pathetic. He may have had fine ideals, but He was a loser. He handled it completely wrong. Nevertheless, that way downward brought Him upward. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him (Philippians 2:8–9). So foolish it was not, but to the world it looks foolish. People look no further than death, and then it is over.

Christ sent Paul to preach the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Not with philosophy, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. It is simply preaching that the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. Even without philosophy, it is simply a historical fact. This theme of wisdom runs through to 2:16.

Lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect = lest it be emptied by philosophy. Lest it become contentless through it. The content is that we have died. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness = those are the ones who do not believe. For believers it is the power of God unto salvation.

Salvation does not come about by wisdom and certainly not by human wisdom, although that human wisdom was and is held in high esteem, even though it has generally been devalued. Nevertheless, philosophy is still the highest human wisdom. Our modern philosophy has again sprung from the old philosophy. People try to answer

life's questions apart from existence and therefore also apart from the work of God and apart from the Word of God. Then the Word of God is called foolishness.

Paul says that the gospel may be foolishness to man, but that is what the Old Testament teaches about it...

1 Corinthians 1:19

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

A quotation from Isaiah 29:14. God would demonstrate in His work the foolishness of human wisdom. He has put that human wisdom to shame.

There are of course other Scripture passages that say that wisdom amounts to nothing. Job 5:12 is also given as a reference. That book deals with human wisdom, with different kinds of philosophy, personified in Job's three friends, who give different answers to the question of why things went so badly for Job. They are very complicated arguments. One cannot always follow them well, but what is demonstrated to us is precisely that all that philosophy gets you nowhere. The question why things went so badly for Job is answered very simply. The sons of God came together once and got talking about Job. Job was surely so righteous because things went well for him. Just wait until things go badly for him. The Lord then said they could do as they pleased. That is the whole story. The cause lay in heavenly things, but first and foremost it had to do with the conflict that exists between God and Satan. That is where it came from. It had nothing to do with whether one is wise enough to order one's life. It had nothing to do with cause and effect here on earth. It came from somewhere else.

At the end of the story those three friends of Job stand exposed as foolish. They were wrong. Their wisdom proved not to be wisdom. It was interesting, and you have to be well educated to follow the story. It is an intellectual challenge, but it gets you nowhere. Philosophy is the same. It is a challenge for man. Man thinks and therefore exists, and to give his existence content he thinks again, but all that sort of philosophy gets man nowhere. His life does not change because of it, the world does not change because of it.

The Lord will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. This was announced in the Old Testament and, according to Paul, has been realised in the gospel, in the death and resurrection of Christ and the preaching of it.

Paul challenges the so-called wise...

1 Corinthians 1:20

Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

Where are those lads then? What has become of your fine stories? They are rhetorical questions. Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? Yes.

Human wisdom gets you nowhere at all. What God has revealed to us is the wisdom of God. That is useful, even though it is foolishness to the world. In this same chapter it is also said that Christ is made unto us wisdom of God. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). If that is so, what do you still want with the wisdom and philosophy of the world?

1 Corinthians 1:21

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. After that = because, but “because” is static. A time went before it. A process went before it and that led to nothing.

After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God. At any rate four thousand years of human history have passed with human wisdom. It was there, but it did not bring man to the knowledge of God. Would they then have come to knowledge of man? Probably not either. Knowledge of what then? No idea. If it had brought them knowledge, why do we not have it today? How is it then that even today books are still published that are supposed to tell you how life should be ordered, how society should be ordered, and so on? Six thousand years of human history ought to be enough. That ought to have led to a conclusion? But it has not. People keep searching. The terrible thing is that Christians do it too. If you study theology these days, you get philosophy. What is even worse is that what passes for theology has also become philosophy. The world did not come to the knowledge of God through wisdom. God allowed that to happen and thereby made His point, in the wisdom of God, to demonstrate that it does not work.

With the same purpose He formerly gave Israel the law, to demonstrate that that too does not work.

God gave man the opportunity, generation after generation, to study, to find God through wisdom, but man did not come to the knowledge of God. Under the law either, for under it one comes at best to the knowledge of sin.

And because this did not happen, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Man is saved only by faith in the preaching of the Word of God. For that you do not need to go to a philosophers’ school. You only need to express your trust in God and His Word and in practice in the Lord Jesus Christ—faith in His death and resurrection. The Corinthians, however, had remained stuck at His death.

1 Corinthians 1:22

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

The Greeks are the lads who think, and the Jews are the lads who do not think. They may have that name today, but certainly not in the Bible. The Jews do not occupy themselves with philosophy, but with outward things. With the rituals of man and possibly with signs.

The Jews require signs. Not that it helps anything, but the same applies to the wisdom of the Greeks. The signs in the past and in the days of the Lord Jesus and the apostles got them nowhere. If you read it all, it is scarcely more than a fairground attraction. They were impressed by it. If someone came to preach, they immediately asked: “What sign do you do?” They wanted to see signs.

Even in our days people want to see miracles, but that those miracles are signs of something, that they do not want to see. They are the illustrations of God’s work. They saw only the picture, but that there was something behind it never dawned on them. To this day people do not understand the signs the Lord did. A fairly recent theory is that all those signs and wonders are reasoned away. They are just fairy tales, stories with a meaning. Symbolism, but of what? No one can tell you. It is all superficiality. That is exactly what religion is: superficiality.

Philosophy is not that, but philosophy misses the point. It gets nowhere because it deliberately leaves certain real things out of consideration. Philosophy sometimes touches on invisible things, but in principle does not occupy itself with them. People know no more about them and cannot know more. Man needs the Word of God, in which God reveals Himself to man. God demonstrates His Word and His authority, if need be, with wonders, which are at the same time illustrations of the work He does, will do, and sometimes of what He has done.

The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom...

1 Corinthians 1:23

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

The Christ is the Crucified One. The Jews absolutely leave that out of consideration. Despite the Old Testament, they do not know the Messiah who would first suffer and so enter into His glory, with the words from 1 Peter 1.

To the Jews Christ is the stone of stumbling, the rock of offence. That word is offence = stumblingblock.

To the Greeks foolishness, because death can by definition fulfil no function in this life. Death is the end of life and therefore cannot be something good.

1 Corinthians 1:24

But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Them which are called = the believers. If one does not come to faith, one cannot have part in election either. We who believe are chosen in Christ. God has chosen Christ, and if we have part in Him, then we are in Him and thus have part in His election. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. We are graced in Him, justified in Him; in Him we have also become an inheritance and in Him we shall in the future also receive an inheritance. All our blessings as believers are those of Christ. If one has no part in Christ, then one has no part in those blessings either, nor in His election, nor in His glory, nor in His eternal life. It is no more difficult than that. Election is set before you. You can have part in it. Therefore you must come to faith. Therefore the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Not election. Therefore the gospel is preached boldly to all people everywhere. Both Jew and Greek is called. Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. That gospel is preached to those who are called. There is no preaching to unbelievers, but to believers. That is still the case today. Most Christian preaching is for one's own parish. Is there then a message for believers? Yes, but that message is not that one should come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, for that is assumed already to have happened. There is of course a sequel to that. It is through that sequel that divisions arise, for that was what it was about.

That is Paul's frustration: that they will not accept the preaching of Christ. That preaching is in essence that the Crucified One has risen, has been highly exalted, crowned with honour and glory, and has become High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. He has been given to the church as Head over all. That we as believers must learn. We have not merely received forgiveness of sins and thereby a sort of life insurance for the future. We have been drawn out of this present world. We have been set apart, sanctified in Christ Jesus. We have been placed outside the camp, so that in

that position we might serve righteousness in our whole life. But the Corinthians had no intention of that. The following chapters make that clear. That is not philosophy. It is beyond philosophy and therefore called foolishness, but the foolishness of God is wiser than men. The weakness of God is stronger than men. The power of God would be perfected precisely in the weakness of man. God has an interest in demonstrating that all that human business leads nowhere. He has an interest in making that clear to everyone. Therefore we had better accept it as quickly as possible. Then we have done with it and can place ourselves as quickly as possible under the preaching of Christ and thus under the preaching of the Word of God, so that that Word, and not the word of men, may have its effect in our lives.

Because the wisdom of the world has not led to the knowledge of God, we now get a foolish message, for Christ is to them that perish foolishness. That foolishness of the gospel does not come from human wisdom, but it is about something God has accomplished without appealing to wisdom.

The preaching of the death of the cross is actually contrary to all human wisdom, for human wisdom is about life: how one should order life, but also how one should maintain life, stretch it out as long as possible, and make something of it. The Bible teaches the opposite. Earthly life leads to nothing. The old life must be put away and new life put in its place. That happens through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the gospel is about the resurrection of the Crucified One: "But ye have slain the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead" (Acts 3, though the thought is in Acts 2). At that point the exposition often stops. Not in Acts 2, incidentally. Once it comes to resurrection, the comment is usually: "Yes, yes, that will all be fine," and then the message stops. Nevertheless, this message that the world finds foolish is the wisdom of God.

The world seeks power and wisdom but does not find them. Those who are called, however—the believers—have found that power and wisdom in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One in whom the power of God takes form. He upholds all things by the word of His power. He is also called the wisdom of God. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3).

1 Corinthians 1:25

Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

Among the believers in Corinth there were not many who amounted to anything in the world.

1 Corinthians 1:27

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

But the foolish things, the weak things, and the base things God has chosen. That is three times the opposite of what is stated in verse 26.

God hath chosen them, that he might put the wise to shame. They always get irritated when the Word of God is preached, because it does not appeal to man. God hath

chosen the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things which are mighty. You find this illustrated in the Old Testament, where God quite often makes use of people who, by human standards, were not at all qualified for the task. It is usually second or last choice. That is certainly the case with the birthright. Think, for example, of David, whom no one thought would qualify for kingship. His family had even completely forgotten about him. Yet God chose him and used him. He had experience as a shepherd; does that make one suitable to be king? With God, apparently it does. God hath therefore chosen the foolish things of the world. He has an interest in putting the wise to shame. In the same way He hath chosen the weak things of the world, for He has an interest in putting the strong of the world to shame.

1 Corinthians 1:28

And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

God demonstrates that no good thing dwells in man, that he cannot be improved from any side. If anything is to come of him at all, it can only be by the power of God. Not that He fights for it, but in the history of salvation He has something to demonstrate, because His attributes are called into question in this world. That is why man is given every opportunity to go his own way, only to run hard into the wall and come to the realisation that it does not work that way. Unless we want to deceive ourselves—but in fact we know ourselves that we are doing so, and with that the point is essentially made. God therefore has something to demonstrate. The law serves to demonstrate the sinful nature of man. The calling of the church is so that God might show the exceeding riches of his grace. His attributes are called into question; therefore He demonstrates those attributes in the course of the history of salvation. In our days it is demonstrated that the wisdom of the world leads man nowhere. That man is better off being poor in spirit, better off being meek, for blessed are the meek. They have a receptive heart. In that heart God perfects His power, but also His wisdom. However much that wisdom is set aside, it still plays a role here. It is indeed a wisdom, but not the wisdom developed by man; it is a wisdom that is of God, which He reveals, demonstrates, and works out—precisely and especially in the foolish, the weak, and the base.

He brings to nought the things of the world. He has occupied Himself with man for some four thousand years. That has led to nothing. They killed His servants and finally His Son too. Since then God has let the world go, turned out the light, and now He lets the world sort itself out for a while. He has hidden His face from the world, and the world is given the opportunity to manage without God for a time.

This thoroughly biblical truth is completely unknown in Christendom. That is because Christendom looks much the same as the situation here in Corinth: divided, carnal, with earthly distinctions, and not inclined to listen to the Word of God. Of course such texts are read, but it only leads to the commentators treading the Corinthians even further into the ground. They were just weak and base. Church leaders traditionally do not rank themselves in that category. So those Corinthians must have been really bad. As for wisdom, if one studies theology in these days, much of it is about philosophy, management, economics, and so on. The Bible hardly comes into it any more. Man pushes aside the wisdom of God to put his own cleverness in its place. That is how it has always been, and it is still the case.

1 Corinthians 1:29

That no flesh should glory in his presence.

Those long periods in the history of salvation serve that purpose. Not to accomplish something, but to demonstrate the situation in such a way that every man must acknowledge that it is so. This present time is the high point of the whole history of salvation, because it not only forgives sinners their sins, but also gives them eternal life and moreover promotes them to heaven and takes them into His ecclesia, His council of elders, so that they might share in His glory. And as the crowning touch, they have had to do nothing at all for it. We do something, for we submit ourselves to God's work, God's plan, God's power, and all such things. That is what it is about, and that is also what Paul tries to get into the Corinthians' heads over two long epistles.

That no flesh should glory before God. That every mouth might be stopped. Read, for example, Romans 3. That chapter is generally poorly understood because it is divided into different sections, each with its own heading, but the whole chapter speaks of the righteousness of God and the unrighteousness of man. That righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel.

1 Corinthians 1:30

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

Of him. The emphasis lies there. This verse speaks of the Origin of what we have become. We are of him, in Christ Jesus. God Himself has placed us in Christ Jesus. God hath raised us up together with Christ and seated us in the heavenlies...

Ephesians 2:7

That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

By grace are ye saved, through faith are ye saved. Not of yourselves are ye saved; it is the gift of God that ye are saved. Not of works are ye saved, lest any man should boast. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. God has identified us with Christ Jesus. He has done that. The cause and source of it also lies with Him and not with us. We have contributed nothing to it.

By not repeating "are ye saved" every time, people read that faith is God's gift. God must give you that faith, so that you cannot help not believing either. But faith is our own responsibility. Faith in the Word. It is His responsibility that this Word comes to us, but it is our responsibility to accept that Word.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Not of good works, but unto good works. Good works are not the cause of our salvation, but the purpose of our salvation. Good works are works in which God the Father is glorified, for all things are to be to His glory. In those works we should walk. That is also the content of this epistle to the Corinthians: that one should walk in those good works. Christ Jesus is made unto us wisdom of God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. When man seeks wisdom, he seeks righteousness, sanctification, and

redemption. Yet he seeks them apart from God. Those concepts for which the world searches are fixed in and have taken form in Christ Jesus. He is the embodiment of the wisdom of God and thereby also of the righteousness of God, for God hath set him forth to be a propitiation, and to declare his righteousness (Romans 3:25).

He is made unto us wisdom of God. That was already in verse 24: the power of God and the wisdom of God.

He is the Holy One par excellence. He is consecrated to the service of God. He is subject to God. If there is a creation, then everyone should be subject to God. If that is not so, one immediately detracts from the concept of God. If there is a God, it automatically implies that there is a creation that should serve Him. That last is called being holy, or sanctification. Some think sanctification has to do with abstaining from sin. Yet it is not about abstaining from something, but about doing something: serving God. In other words, walking in the good works which God hath before ordained. Christ does that. He was sanctified in His resurrection. He has been appointed High Priest of the new covenant. Insofar as we are in Christ, we too have been made priests, kings and priests unto God and his Father (Revelation 1:6).

He has also become redemption unto us. We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (also Romans 3:24).

All those concepts that the old man seeks—those ideas of Plato—take form in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The world knows that such things must exist, but cannot find them. Philosophy has been searching for them since time immemorial, and when one finds them, one arrives at the Lord Jesus Christ. He that seeketh wisdom, especially he that seeketh her early, shall find her (Proverbs 8:17). Romans 3:11 says there is none that seeketh after God, but there are those who seek wisdom, sanctification, righteousness, and redemption, and when one seeks those, one arrives at the Lord Jesus Christ. Then He lets Himself be found moreover. Paul says in Athens that it is the purpose of man that he should seek God, and He is not far from every one of us. It may be a long road to find Him, but He is close to us. He also gives the old man life, breath, and all things.

These things therefore proceed from God and not from us, with the result...

1 Corinthians 1:31

That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. He grants us these things in Christ. So wisdom indeed, but not according to man. Paul also says that the message he preaches is not according to man. If it were, he would not be persecuted. He received it not from man, not even from the apostles, but from God (Galatians 1:12). Therefore one should glory in Him.

The basic things are not understood. People have not truly come to full surrender to the Lord. They want to take all their possessions and holdings with them. The message is: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house," but when one has come to faith, one prefers to take all those things along. Fundamentally it is: "Out!"

Paul cannot get that into them. That is why he also feels weak.

1 Corinthians 2:1

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

Paul did not preach some philosophy or other, some Greek wisdom teaching, as was customary among the Greeks. He did not come with excellency of speech. He did not come merely with a fine story. In those philosophical schools of Greece it was not only about gaining insight into man and the world, but also about rhetoric, about eloquence, or, as the Bible calls it, fine speaking. How one says things beautifully.

He did not come with excellency of speech or of wisdom, for if that wisdom amounts to little, one can always wrap it in a fine package. Especially when one has nothing to say, the art of rhetoric comes in very handy. It is said that language exists to avoid saying things, to talk around them. Communication is talking as closely past each other as possible. That happens because people have something to hide, and especially to hide that they have no understanding of it either. Paul, however, did not do that.

The Corinthians also held it against Paul that he was no good speaker. That comes out in both epistles.

The testimony of God = testimony should not be there. That is a slip of the pen or a misreading by the translators.

Testimony = martyrion. That is also where the word martyr comes from: witness. It should have been mysterion = mystery.

How do we know that? From the better manuscripts.

If it reads testimony of God, such an expression means nothing at all. That it must be mystery is also evident. In verse 1 Paul says he did not come with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the mystery of God, and in verse 7 he says: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery." Quite apart from what it means, he did not do that with the Corinthians, while in verse 7 he says that he does do it at times—just not with the Corinthians. There was a good reason for that: they were not ready for it. They did not understand it and could not understand it. He says that also in 3:1: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it." They were not ready for it and could not digest it. That is why he did not come with excellency of speech or of wisdom, because they could not handle it. They understood nothing of it.

Mystery is a fixed biblical concept, which is usually reasoned away. The common explanation of the concept of mystery is that it refers to what God has not yet revealed. In other words, before Genesis 1 everything was still hidden, and only later are things made known, and thus the mystery is revealed. That is in itself a fairly biblical truth. In our English translation we also find similar statements that things were not yet revealed but have now been revealed, already in Old Testament times. Curiously, a different word for hiddenness is used in those statements.

Mysterion corresponds to the Hebrew satar. That does not concern something included in the plan but not yet made known, but something that actually already exists but is still covered. It is not at all the intention that it should be made known. It is a secret. You know it exists, but you do not know what it is.

Other words for hiddenness have different descriptions. In most cases it means that you have no idea it exists at all. You have never heard of it, and when it is made known, it is completely new.

When satar or mysterion is made known, it is not completely new. You were waiting for it. You knew something was there, only not what it was. Example:

Romans 2:16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

The secrets = kryptos. Those are indeed hidden things, but not mysterion.

Paul says he has not yet declared the mystery of God to the Corinthians. The mystery of God concerns all God's work in this present time. It concerns everything He does, but also everything He precisely does not do in these days. Mystery concerns the calling of the church in these days, but also that the Jewish people are not called in these days, but are cut off and set aside. Note well: in these days. The mystery specifically concerns the time between the sufferings that would come upon Christ and the glory that should follow (1 Peter 1:11). That is the time in which we live.

1 Corinthians 2:2

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

It does not say: "I determined not to know any thing among you, save the crucifixion of Jesus." It is: Jesus Christ, and him crucified. The translation is somewhat problematic. It is something like: Jesus Christ, yes, the Crucified One.

This does not necessarily mean that Paul spoke of nothing else, but it does mean that the essence of his preaching was: Jesus Christ, the Crucified One. He is no longer on the cross. He has been taken down from the cross, buried, and on the third day raised from the dead, as described at length in chapter 15. The preaching of the gospel is that the Lord Jesus was crucified and on the third day rose again and was seen by many. He certainly did preach that the Lord Jesus rose again, but the essence is that this Jesus is the Crucified One. Even when He returns He is the Crucified One. That is why people will then ask Him who He is and how He got those wounds. The answer will then be that He is the Crucified One.

The whole problem is that the Corinthians were not willing to accept that crucifixion. As a historical fact, yes, but it is not merely a historical fact; it is also an actual fact. For if one died for all, then were all dead. The consequence of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus is, because He represented the whole of mankind, that the whole of mankind is reckoned to be dead. That is the great dilemma and actually the great problem of the gospel, against which there is the greatest resistance.

Galatians 6:13

For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

That corresponds rather well with: I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. That crucifixion has the consequence that I too am crucified unto the world, and the world unto me.

Death is a relative concept. It concerns the relationship between two parties. If there is no more communication, then the other party is dead to you, and vice versa. There should be no more communication between believers and the world.

Galatians 6:15

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Galatians 6:12

As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. There are also people who want to make a fair shew for the sake of testimony. You must after all show that you are a Christian and thus a decent person. That is why they want to make a fair shew in the flesh, with the idea that this supports the preaching of the message. Religion? (including circumcision) Nothing to do with it; that is human wisdom. That is man trying to climb up to God in heaven. Yet there is nothing to climb up to in heaven to fetch something. That is also not necessary at all. We have died to the world and have been drawn by God out of darkness. We have nothing to do with that world. That we have human interests in the world may be so, but that has nothing to do with Christianity, and the Lord does not want to be involved in it either. He too has died to the world, and for the world He is still the Crucified One. After His resurrection He did not show Himself to the world as the Risen One. He will do that in the future. Then they shall look upon him whom they pierced. Then history continues, as though it happened yesterday. In the meantime the Lord Jesus is the Despised One, the Base among men. Then He is the Least among men, but God will set the Least among men over the kingdoms of the earth. We have nothing to seek in the world. The Lord had nothing to seek there either. Perhaps He did, but He said He would not do it. That is why Paul says: "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Hebrews 13:13). That is what it is about, and the Corinthians had no taste for it. They sought a position here on earth. They sought justice here on earth, or what passed for it. There were also lawsuits among brethren. Of course they had heard of grace, but they abused it for licentiousness in the church. People want to use the Lord for a position in the world and use His grace to lead an unrestrained life. That was a problem, and if one cannot see that, then the message cannot go beyond Jesus Christ, and him crucified. One must first have understood that. If one does not first fundamentally accept that one has died to the world, to sin, and to the law, then one does not come to the knowledge of the mystery. Perhaps a little knowing about it, but it concerns knowing. Then one does not come to the consciousness that one has become a citizen of heaven, that one has a High Priest who cares for us and supplies all our need. Not to mention the second coming of Christ and thus the end of the mystery. That has always been the dilemma in Christendom. One threshold is coming to faith; the next threshold is that one also actually allows oneself to be taught in God's present work, of which we are the object and in which we have a place.

1 Corinthians 2:3

And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. Power rests on the risen Christ and on His present position, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, in which He is given to the church as Head. We are members of His body, but yes, that is really solid food. That is why it is so poorly understood. Instead, we are expected to be members of a church. There one does not worry about the great ignorance of Christians, but one does worry about dechuraching. It seems that there are 5,000 fewer church members every month. Then it goes at a rapid pace. Moreover, dechuraching is in itself a useful thing. If you do not believe, you do not belong there anyway, but if you do believe, actually not either. Those may be ugly things to say, but the apostles and also the Lord Jesus were certainly not mild in their judgment on such things. It is far more worrying that there is a complete lack of Bible knowledge,

which of course stems from a lack of faith. Those two things go together. And indeed, speaking about the resurrection is fine, but probably in most churches it is better to preach first about Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

We are not of the world, and one should not expect the Lord to do anything for you in the world. That is not to say He does not do it, but one should not count on it. He has not promised it at all. He has promised to care for us, so that we might walk out of His strength and out of His grace in the good works which He has before ordained for us. He does not send us to a denomination, not even to a missionary society, and not even to a Bible school. What He expects of us is that we come to know Him and personally place our trust in Him. After that we are expected, as children of God, to take our responsibility and run the course He has set before us, in which we must learn to make our own decisions, for that is part of growing up.

If one must preach to believers that we have after all died with Christ and have no place in the world, then that is not pleasant to do, because strictly speaking it is not a positive message, because it is about “not this and not that and not the other,” while there are so many finer things to tell. But that is pointless, for one does not understand them if the basic things are not first understood. One has not truly come to full surrender to the Lord. One wants to take all one’s possessions and holdings along. The message is: “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house,” but when one has come to faith, one prefers to take all those things along. Fundamentally it is: “Out!”

Paul cannot get that into them. That is why he also feels weak.

1 Corinthians 2:4

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

His preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, not in grand rhetoric, not in philosophy, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. He tried with his personal authority to bring people something. “This is how it is and no other way.” That is plain speaking, straight to the point. How far does that get you? Sometimes it helps for a while, but in the long run it probably gets you nowhere. Some people need a push, or personal help, to get over the threshold, but afterwards they must take up responsibility for their own lives again to make something of them.

Paul’s manner of speaking, but also its content, was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom.

Enticing words = words that move, motivating words.

But in demonstration of the Spirit and of power = that is the foolish word of the gospel, the power of God unto salvation.

1 Corinthians 2:5

That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

Perfect = mature, grown-up. When people are mature, they have grown to full stature.

Paul says in 3:1 that he could not speak unto them as unto spiritual, but as unto babes in Christ. He fed them with milk. The Corinthians were not mature.

Nevertheless, Paul does speak wisdom, but among the mature. Wisdom indeed, but not of this world. Not what man has thought up himself, but what God has thought up. His thoughts are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8).

1 Corinthians 2:7

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery. It is a hidden wisdom of God. That wisdom was concealed. Before the world was, God ordained certain things unto our glory. It concerns a glory that God determined beforehand.

Ordain = horizo = horizon = boundary = to determine the final destination.

We also know how it is and to what God has ordained us. He hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, and thereby unto glory. That has to do with maturity. Children are not placed as sons. One must first be mature, be a son, to be able to be placed as a son. That is God's plan. Those are God's thoughts. That is God's wisdom. "That wisdom we speak," says Paul. That wisdom was hidden from the world and is still hidden from the world.

In Ephesians 1:5 it is not only said that God hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, but also that He hath made known unto us the mystery of his will (verse 9). To us who are in Christ. That has to do with His present work. That present work of Christ will remain hidden from the world. Not only does He Himself hide His face from the world, but the work He does also takes place in secret. One can just about decide that God is apparently doing something. If you follow that work in the world, it stops at the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus and continues at His return, when the Jewish people are at last converted. What lies in between—God will do something, but what exactly? He has made it known, but it is a work not to the world but to believers, with regard to the glory which He hath before ordained for us. That is no emergency measure after the Jewish people remained unbelieving, but it was already ordained before the world was.

According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:11). That concerns exactly the same things: the outworking of that old plan of God. It concerns the outworking of a plan from before the ages of the ages, before the founding of the world. So it stands here in 1 Corinthians 2 as well.

It is therefore about a hidden wisdom.

1 Corinthians 2:8

Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

It is indeed a wisdom not of this world, nor of the princes of this world. They are supposed not to know how things stand. They are indeed princes of the world, but they do not notice that God is doing something. That He is calling and gathering a people for His name out of this world. Had they known of that mystery, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. That Lord, namely, who would receive that glory as the First. Which glory? The glory from verse 7. The glory that God hath before ordained for us. Us = the gathered believers of our dispensation. That is the church, and Christ is its first Member, both in chronological order and in rank.

The princes of the world did not know that, for then they would not have crucified the Lord, who was to be glorified. They would have done everything to keep Him alive. Had

they known that He would rise on the other side of death, they would not have driven Him into it on this side. They drove Him into death and thought they were rid of Him, but He rose from the dead. The grave on the same side, but out of the realm of the dead on the other side. That is to say, not back into this old world, but as the Firstfruits of a new creation, to whom this old creation is of course subject. That remained hidden in Old Testament times and also in Old Testament prophecy. Those things are in the Old Testament, but concealed in it. They lie hidden in it. If you do not take the trouble to remove that covering, you will not know what lies beneath. That may be rather boldly said, but if you do not read the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, that covering remains over it. That is what the apostle writes. In 2 Corinthians 3 it says that when the Old Testament is read, the veil remains. The Jews have nothing but the Old Testament and they will not even believe that. Yet in the Old Testament what God is doing in this present time is indeed expressed in words, but in such a way that it cannot be understood. Those are vague texts, cryptic statements in the Old Testament, of which you have no idea what they are about—were it not that in the New Testament many of those expressions are quoted and explained.

When Isaiah 45 speaks of a name above every name and that every knee should bow to Him, we do not know what it is about, but in the New Testament we are told how it is: that this concerns the Lord Jesus, who has inherited that name above every name and that in His name every knee should bow. With the Old Testament alone one cannot prove that this is a Messianic prophecy.

That was an easy one, but a harder one is that the stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. What on earth is that about? It is apparently about something the builders did wrong, but something else happens outside the will and work of the builders. What is that about? It does not say, but in the New Testament it is quoted and explained several times. Even the Lord Jesus quotes the passage from the Old Testament.

There are many more such Scripture passages in the Old Testament that concern the mystery. And we have not even mentioned the symbolism, the typology, in the Old Testament yet. Both the specific types and the histories of the Old Testament in general. In the miracles that happen in the Old Testament, present truth is expressed anyway, but in the histories very often too. We know that is so because it is quoted in the New Testament. How is it, for example, with Ishmael and Isaac, with Jacob and Esau, with Sarah and Hagar, with Sinai and Zion? Galatians 4 says that these things have an allegorical meaning, and it states roughly what that meaning is. There too you find the contrast between God's work in the world and with the people Israel, but also between Israel and the gathering of the church. Those things are set over against each other. In Genesis you already find illustrations of that. You would not have known it if it had not simply been in the New Testament.

And what does it mean that the high priest went into the sanctuary once a year to make atonement for the sins of the people? Why had that to be done every year anew? Paul says because it did not work. It is a picture of our present time, in which the Lord as High Priest of the New Covenant has entered the sanctuary. From outside nothing is to be seen, but it is the Day of Atonement, and it has been for more than two thousand years. That is in the Old Testament, but not explicitly. Even the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus is not explicit in the Old Testament. There are only two Scripture passages in the Old Testament that speak of it. One is Zechariah 12 and 13 ("They shall look upon me whom

they have pierced” and “What are these wounds in thine hands?”). That concerns the crucifixion, but how do we know? Because we know the story of the crucifixion from the New Testament. Otherwise we would not have thought of it. The other passage is Psalm 22. We know that because four or five texts from that Psalm are quoted in the New Testament concerning the crucifixion. If you had only that Psalm, you would not know it was about the crucifixion. Isaiah 53 even less so. “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). He opened not his mouth. We know what it refers to, but that is because we have read the New Testament. And that passage too is quoted, in the history of the eunuch from Ethiopia. He asked: “Of whom speaketh the prophet this?” Philip answered that it was of Jesus. Then we know, and we also understand that there are many more Scripture passages with the same purport.

It is not stated explicitly. It has been kept hidden from the world. They were not to know it. God does not make known in advance what His next moves will be. At any rate not to the enemy. But to His friends (John 15:15). It is war, and you do not betray your strategy in advance. The enemy, with all his wisdom, has not managed to understand all those Scripture passages. If one expects it from man himself, one will understand nothing of God’s wisdom. One should listen to the Lord, that He might teach us. In the next verse, therefore, you get such a statement from the Old Testament.

1 Corinthians 2:9

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

A quotation from Isaiah 64:4. What is that text about? About what God would do in the time between the suffering that would come upon Christ and the glory afterwards.

Those words are Peter’s. He too was very well aware of these things. Sometimes people think Paul was the only one who revealed the mystery, but Peter did so too. Paul simply wrote the most epistles. It is logical, therefore, that you find it more often with him. 1

Peter 1:9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

The goal of our life as believers is that our souls too might be saved.

1 Peter 1:10

Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

The prophets themselves searched their prophecies. Those prophecies came from the Spirit of God. They only passed them on.

1 Peter 1:11

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit who was in them signified. The Spirit signified and testified beforehand of Christ, the sufferings upon Christ, and the glory following.

It is therefore not the Spirit of Christ, but the Spirit who signified and testified beforehand of Christ. It is therefore not about the sufferings of Christ, nor about His glory, but about the time. Searching and enquiring about what and what manner of time the Spirit signified. That is therefore the time between the sufferings that would come upon Christ and the glory afterwards. That the prophets prophesied of the sufferings

that would come upon Christ cannot be missed. You do not need much to understand that, especially if you read the Psalms. There you read of the sufferings of the Christ. It also appears in the symbolism of various histories. Think of David. He had to suffer first before coming to kingship. It is also not so difficult to arrive at the glory of the Messiah by the same route. The Messiah would after all inherit the throne of David as Son of David and have an unshakable kingdom. All that can be found, but what lies in between is well hidden. How Christ Himself comes from suffering to glory is not clearly stated. The prophets did prophesy about that, but to know about what time it was, they had to search their prophecies.

1 Peter 1:12

Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

There follows in Peter the exposition that we are on the way to glory. That we as believers are a royal and priestly people, that we have come to that one Stone which the builders rejected, and that we are a people of kings and priests, to proclaim the virtues of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. In short, Peter demonstrates what he said here: that those things were indeed hidden in the Old Testament. He himself contributes here to removing that covering, although strictly speaking it is the Lord Himself who does it. In 2 Corinthians 3 it says that the Lord will take away the veil when one comes to faith in Him. That applies not only to the Jewish people, but also to us as believers in this present time.

Back to 1 Corinthians 2:9.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

This verse is quite often quoted to assert the very opposite of its meaning. Precisely those Scripture passages that deal with this subject have suffered considerably.

Mistakes were made in copying, but also in translation. Probably because the people who copied or translated them did not understand them either. If you do not understand what you read, you cannot translate it properly. The KJV translators, fortunately, in most cases where they did not understand, still faithfully translated the words one by one. They remained true to the original text, even if they sometimes did not grasp it. The NBB translation aimed to make it as clear as possible, to bring the Bible closer to people, but when they did not understand, they simply made something up.

As mentioned, this is a quotation from Isaiah 64:4. The whole chapter concerns this present time.

Isaiah 64:1 -2

Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence,

2 As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!

The prayer, the desire, is that God would once again make Himself heard, that He would do something, or better still, that He would come down from heaven. The idea is that God hides Himself in heaven from the world. The desire is that this God in heaven would come to earth to set things in order. The waters are a figure of the nations. The prayer is

that God would come down like melting fire, in His fierce wrath, with the result that the waters boil—that the nations are judged.

Apparently this speaks of a time when God hides Himself in heaven and people wait for His personal coming. The personal coming of God means the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is the Person of the Godhead. He is the express image of God's person. It is therefore a prayer for the coming of the Messiah, as Son of God, to judge the world.

Isaiah 64:3

When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.

Terrible things = things that inspire fear. They had not reckoned with them at all, as for example at the exodus from Egypt, when the waters of the Red Sea parted and Israel passed through the sea to the other side, in which moreover the army of the Egyptian world empire perished. They had not reckoned with that, but it happened nonetheless. Mountains = kingdoms or kings.

When the mountains are made plain, it means that the proud in this world will be humbled.

In the prophecies another terrible mountain is spoken of that will be cast into the sea: Babylon. The mountains will, so to speak, melt away.

Isaiah 64:4

For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

This is quoted in 1 Corinthians 2. According to 1 Corinthians 2, it therefore speaks of what God does in the time when He hides Himself. It has not been heard from of old, not since before the founding of the world. It concerns hidden things. It does not say what they are, but strictly speaking 1 Corinthians 2 does not say either. The Corinthians were still children, so they were not yet ready for it. They clung too much to the old world. They lived as carnal.

It therefore speaks of this present time, characterised by the fact that heaven is closed. God hides Himself, Christ hides Himself, His kingdom is hidden, and insofar as we are children of God, our life is hid with Christ in God, and we know that we shall be manifested with Him in glory. The idea that God should form His church out of sinners, who will share with Him in His glory—yes, that is unheard of. We would never have thought of it. Moreover, you cannot see or hear it, but that is what He does and what He has revealed to us. One should understand the background against which these words are written. It is about the time when God hides Himself in the heavens, Israel is officially disobedient. Insofar as God does a work, it happens apart from Israel.

Isaiah 64:5

Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

This is the description of the judgment upon the Jewish people.

Isaiah 64:7

And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

To call upon His name is strictly forbidden in Jewish circles. For that purpose His name is also kept secret, as far as that is possible.

Isaiah 64:8

But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

9 Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.

This is a fine example of the prayer that the believing remnant will pray at the end of the seventieth week of Daniel. An example, for there are more such prayers in the Bible with the same purport. The Lord hides Himself and they call upon Him, that He would no longer hide Himself, but bring judgment upon the nations and restore Israel.

Isaiah 64:10

Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.

That is the situation at the end of the seventieth week of Daniel.

11 Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.

12 Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O LORD? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

In anticipation of that, the Lord does something that has not been seen from of old, nor heard with the ears, and so on. The point is that these things are indeed mentioned in the Old Testament, without being explained. Without the New Testament, one cannot understand what this chapter is about.

Back to 1 Corinthians 2:9.

This verse is regularly taken out of its context, and when questions have to be answered to which there is no answer, this text is brought forward. Then the verse is recited, and that is that. Next question. But there should be no full stop at the end of verse 9, for the verse is followed by a conjunction, so there should be a comma. The sentence is not yet complete.

1 Corinthians 2:10

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

That is the point. God hath revealed them unto us. That which was concealed—especially those things from 1 Corinthians 2:9—God hath revealed unto us. That is a spiritual matter, having nothing to do with visible and material things. God hath revealed it unto us by his Spirit.

The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. If we have received that Spirit and do not quench or grieve that Spirit, then that Spirit does what is stated here: searcheth all things. If we are sincere believers, we naturally develop the desire to search all things. Then you want to know what it says. If people do not have the questions from within, you can give them answers, but it means nothing to them. It just passes them by. That was Paul's problem with the Corinthians. He says there is still something to reveal, but God hath revealed it unto us by his Spirit.

Revealed by the Spirit = the normal meaning is that God reveals things in the Scripture. The Holy Scriptures were brought forth by the Spirit. He does so through the prophets. "The Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of Isaiah..." The whole Scripture is God-breathed. When it is revealed to us by His Spirit, it means that the Spirit has brought about the writing of these New Testament books. One could of course also go into how that happened: that the Spirit revealed it to the prophets, who then wrote it down. It is therefore highly unlikely that the Spirit reveals it to us directly and speaks completely apart from the Bible. God gave prophets in the days of Paul. Incidentally, the apostles were also prophets. They have left us these Scriptures. If it is therefore revealed to us by the Spirit, it is revealed to us through the Scriptures.

1 Corinthians 2:11

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

If anyone knows how things stand with you, it is you yourself.

But we have received the Spirit of God, and He knows how things stand with God. The Spirit is the invisible expression of the Godhead. The visible expression of God is the Son. The Spirit is the working of the power of God. When God works, when He does something, He does it through His Word. God therefore makes Himself known. The Bible is after all the self-revelation of the Godhead. If anyone can know how things stand, it is obviously the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 2:12

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

We have not received a worldly spirit, so that we now suddenly understand the things of the world. That is not necessary at all, because when we came to faith we were precisely drawn out of that world by God.

We have received the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the mystery, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God, that we might know what God is doing in this time. That Spirit is the Spirit of truth, who would guide us into all truth. That Spirit is the Spirit of adoption (Romans 8), who would lead us to our adoption as sons. God makes us His children, in order then to bring us to that glory by placing us as sons. Apart from that, as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Galatians says that those led by the Spirit of God are not under the law. Law belongs to the world, and we have died to the law.

We should know what we have received from God. We read that in John 14. The Lord Jesus prays to the Father that He would send another Comforter, who would abide with us for ever.

John 14:17

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Know = have part in; have fellowship with.

John 15:26

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

The Spirit speaks of Christ. If you are filled with the Spirit, what do you speak about? About Christ. The Spirit does not speak of Himself, but He shall testify of Christ. Christ is the great subject of the Bible. That is what God speaks about. It is all about one thing: knowing Him. We can know Him only if He is spoken of. That is what the Spirit does, and thus the Bible too.

John 16:12

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

That is roughly what Paul writes to the Corinthians at much greater length. Here the disciples are not to blame, for the time had not yet come.

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

The Spirit would speak of Christ, and here it says He will guide you into all truth, from which we may conclude that Christ is the Truth. Truth is that which abides; something that is in itself integral, untouchable. Our interrogative pronoun is derived from it: "where." That means it is hard to find and rare.

He shall not speak of himself, but what He hears He shall speak to us and show us things to come. The disciples had the problem of how things would go on. They asked: "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They did not know. That was of course correct, for they were approaching the days of the mystery. But the Lord saw that they would receive the Holy Ghost, and He would guide them into all truth. He would testify of Him and thereby of what Christ does in this present time. From the position from which this is said, it concerns things to come. Things to come in the Bible always speak of everything connected with the New Covenant.

John 16:14

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Certain aspects of Christ, or of the work of Christ, will be specifically made known to us in our time. It will be clear that the Corinthians were not ready for knowing Christ. They first had to lose themselves and come to acceptance of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have lost everything in this life, you are ripe to go to the Lord. But even if you have not lost everything, it is advisable to go to the Lord. If, however, you have lost everything, that makes it somewhat easier. The Lord knows that too; so you are warned. The great tribulation must lead Israel to lose everything indeed, so that their expectation is cut off. Then they will call upon the name of the Lord and be made alive.

The Spirit has several names and titles. For example, the Spirit of adoption, from Romans 8.

Romans 8:15

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The spirit of bondage = the spirit of the world, for the whole world is in slavery. Insofar as we are led by the Spirit of God and give the Spirit opportunity to do His work, He leads us to our adoption as sons. We just read that He leads us into all truth. What then is that truth? That we who are children of God are called to be placed as sons. The Spirit brings us there. He not only makes these things known to us, but also causes us to live in them and by them.

For if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law (Galatians 5:18). Those who live under the New Covenant do not live in bondage, but stand in the liberty wherewith

Christ hath made us free. That Spirit brings us where we need to be. For that purpose we are trained, doctrinally but also practically. Those things go together. The best way to learn things is to experience in practice what you have learned in theoretical lessons. We should let the Spirit do His work, both as to scriptural instruction and as to practical life. And if one was not intending to serve the Lord in daily life anyway, one will never understand anything of biblical truth, however hard one studies. Why would the Spirit teach you those things? The Spirit wants to lead you on a certain path. If you do not want to go that path, you will not learn either. Then the Bible remains closed. That is how these things work in practice. Then there is a veil over it. The Lord Himself illustrates that in history. If the Scriptures are systematically studied anywhere, it is in Judaism, but they are not willing to go the way of the Lord, and therefore they actually know nothing of the Bible. They know a great deal, but do not understand it. You find the same in Christendom. People want to live in the world and acquire a position in the world. They want to make the Bible subordinate to prosperity, and therefore they understand nothing of the Bible either.

We have received the Spirit of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Must we then know those things? Yes, for otherwise we gain nothing from them. What do we gain then? Then we learn to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. We then know that Lord whose property we have become and in whose service we have been placed, who moreover is Head of the church, whose followers we should be, and we know where we shall be brought. You do not follow Moses if you do not know that you are being brought through the wilderness to Canaan. Well, there were those who did not believe that and went off to the left flank. They did not follow Moses, but took ship towards Spain, which has since been called the Iberian Peninsula, the peninsula of the Hebrews. They would not dream of going with Moses. Why should they? They had no confidence in it. But Egypt perished, so they left, but in the other direction.

We too can evade it, but if we withdraw from the Lord, we should not think we shall understand anything of the Bible. As soon as you say to the Lord that you want to serve Him, that you surrender to Him, your Bible opens. Those two things are inseparably connected.

We have received that Spirit, that we might make that wisdom, which is in a mystery, our own. In other places Paul also prays for that. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him (Ephesians 1:17). If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him (James 1:5). It is no shame that you do not know; you tell the Lord. If you ask Him for that wisdom, He will give it to you. Just ask Solomon. Everything else passes away and you lose it. Wisdom you do not lose, and moreover it becomes part of your person.

As long as one reaches back to the fleshpots of Egypt, nothing comes of resurrection life, and it becomes, so to speak, forty wretched years in the wilderness. We no longer have any rights in Egypt. It is not the intention that we reach back to it or long for it. On the contrary, we should reach forward to that blessed hope given to us, namely the appearing in glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. We should reach forward to that land of which we have already become citizens. That is of course heaven, but it is called a better country (Hebrews 11:14-16).

The orientation towards heavenly things is described as the wisdom of God. Paul says he speaks the wisdom of God, and that is more than Jesus Christ and him crucified. Christ is he that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Romans 8:34). Those things are regarded as part of the wisdom of God in a mystery. That is concealed for the world and for Israel.

1 Corinthians 2:13

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

He returns here to where he was already in verse 7. The idea is that spiritual things are combined with spiritual people. When we are spiritual and thus orientated towards those things, we shall receive spiritual things. It depends on our mindset, on our orientation. The same applies to the natural man. You can tell him all sorts of things, but if it does not interest him, it simply passes him by and he understands not a jot of it. If there is interest, however, then it will speak to him, and man and thing are joined together.

We fix our eyes on the Lord and, as seeing the Invisible. When these biblical truths are made known to us, our heart leaps for joy. In short, these things are made known to spiritual people. They will accept them and be open to them.

1 Corinthians 2:14

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Natural man = soulish man. The old man is after all a soul, earthy from the earth. The man who is oriented towards that, towards the outward, does not grasp, does not comprehend, the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. In the first place it does not interest him, but he also cannot understand them. He cannot discern them, because his orientation is wrong. For those things are spiritually discerned. One wonders whether the Corinthians could even follow sentences like this.

Biblical truth is joined together with spiritually oriented people. They belong together. Fitting biblical truth into this old creation is impossible. Those two things do not belong together. The man oriented towards outward things cannot grasp these spiritual things. He may theorise about them, but he never has part in them.

1 Corinthians 2:15

But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

The man oriented towards invisible things discerns all things. He can grasp both earthly and spiritual things, because carnal things are lower than spiritual things—even when “spiritual” is written with a small letter. The reverse does not hold. If you are oriented only towards outward things, you cannot make abstractions your own. The spiritual man certainly knows what is on offer in the world, but he stands above it, because he has part in Christ, is conscious of it, and orients himself towards other things and other standards. He does not ask what other people say about him, but what the Lord will say about him. In the world it is about outward things and indeed about what people say about you. That is important, for it partly determines your life, your career. You depend

on it and live right in the midst of it. A spiritual man asks whether his walk is well-pleasing to God or not; he asks the Lord: "What wilt thou have me to do?" The spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one. For one cannot see from the outside whether someone is spiritual, because it has to do with what goes on in the inner man. In the parable of the seed it is said that the seed falls everywhere, but only when it falls into good soil does it not merely spring up but also bear fruit. Good soil is a spiritual man. That is someone who pays no heed to those outward things. With superficial people, therefore, there is only a thin layer of soil on the rock. The seed springs up, but bears no fruit. It withers. It cannot withstand the pressure of circumstances. There is not enough life-force in it, and it cannot properly develop.

1 Corinthians 2:16

For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Exhortation against division

1 Corinthians 3:1

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

These are the spiritual ones from 2 Corinthians 2:13.

The Corinthians, however, are not spiritual but carnal.

"Babes" = infants, babies.

1 Corinthians 3:2 (KJV)

I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

Milk is for babies. A baby cannot tolerate solid food. At first he can only take milk. A baby has to get used to solid food, and that only happens after a time. In general, Paul speaks negatively about milk. It is for babies.

1 Peter 2:1-2 (KJV)

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation;

They have been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the living and abiding word of God. They are still babies. And they ought therefore to be exceedingly desirous of the milk; otherwise nothing will come of the baby. Normally speaking, babies are also exceedingly desirous of milk. If they are not, things are not well. Try getting the milk down them then. If someone is not desirous of the sincere milk of the word, you have to ask whether such a one is born again at all.

"Unto salvation" — this was once removed from the translation because people thought that if you are born again, you are already saved. But there are different levels of salvation: that of the spirit, of the soul, and of the body. Here it is about the salvation of the soul, of the walk of life. That is clear from the preceding passage.

The word of truth ought to be planted in our hearts, which is able to save our souls. That is said to people who are already born again. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth. Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls

(James 1:18, 21). At any rate, the point is that after you are born again, you ought to take in the sincere milk of the word.

“Reasonable” — this seems almost meaningless, but it means: pertaining to reason, pertaining to the logical.

“Logikos” = pertaining to the logos; pertaining to the Word.

Milk = a figure of the Word of God, but only a beginning. The mystery does not come under that, for that is solid food.

As regards the milk, we as believers have been added to Christ. We are as living stones fitted together with that one Stone. What further consequences that has Peter says hardly anything about, but that is not the issue here either. With Paul those things are very much in view, also in other Scripture passages besides 1 Corinthians 3.

In Hebrews 5 Paul again attempts to write about Christ as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 5:10

Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

Those many things are hard to utter because they have become dull of hearing. That truth is not so difficult, but they do not want to hear it.

Paul has much to tell about Christ, the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, but that is somewhat difficult because you have become dull of hearing.

Hebrews 5:12

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

Milk = the figure of the first principles of the oracles of God. The most fundamental biblical truths, therefore. Name a fundamental biblical truth. For example, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that we as believers are at any rate reckoned to have accepted this. That is where it begins. And thus it concerns the cross.

Hebrews 5:13

For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

If you only drink milk, you get rickets: soft, weak bones. Then your skeletal structure cannot support your body.

He is a babe. A babe is by definition unskilful.

Hebrews 5:14

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Of full age = of the mature.

Paul said he spoke the wisdom of God, but to the mature. A wisdom of God in a mystery. Here it is exactly the same. To the mature belongs solid food. Solid food therefore has to do with the mystery, with the work God is doing in this present time. The whole idea that the Lord Jesus died for our sins and bore the punishment of sins is of course true, but that was also the message in Old Testament times—that it had to happen. That was then still future. Yet that was the idea. If one believed that, that faith was counted for righteousness. That does not specifically have to do with our dispensation. What does have to do with our dispensation is that He who was crucified, buried, and risen has for

the time being only a kingdom in heaven, and that that will only be revealed in the future. And that the Lord Jesus, though not revealed to the world as King, does indeed now fulfil His high-priestly function, which is set out at length in this epistle, for that is the theme of this book of the Bible. The hidden things are for the mature, for those who grow up. They first had milk, for that is indeed necessary, but it must not stop there. For most of his life a man is not fed with milk. It seems that as adults we no longer have the ability to process milk in our bodies.

Use = habituation.

Children too must become accustomed to solid food.

Maturity is knowing what one ought and ought not to do. That one can make one's own decisions and knows what it is about. For that one must be educated.

Hebrews 6:1

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

Leaving = we are no longer speaking of milk.

The principles of the doctrine of Christ = the first principles of the oracles of God from Hebrews 5:12.

Let us go on unto perfection = we now go on to solid food.

All the things mentioned above are milk. Those things exist and are even fundamental.

They are certainly not spoken of negatively, but one must go further at some point. One cannot keep starting again from the beginning.

Hebrews 6:3

And this will we do, if God permit.

We shall go on to maturity. Paul does indeed do that, for after this he goes on to the high priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. After making several attempts, he now takes the hurdle. "Pity if you cannot bear it, but I really must now administer the solid food."

In the Old Testament solid food is usually called honey. Honey is not as thin as we know it from jars, for that is diluted honey. Honeycombs lie more or less horizontally, but it does not drip out. If you eat too much of it, you become sick. It says one must taste it well.

Back to 1 Corinthians 3.

I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

1 Corinthians 3:3

For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

They are still carnal. How does Paul know that? From their behaviour.

There is envying and strife and the like, and so Paul asks the rhetorical question whether they are not carnal. The world runs on envying, strife, and divisions, on conflict. That is the mark of sin. That is carnal and according to man. The gospel is not according to man. It is also not intended for the flesh, for the old man. On the contrary! It comes from God and delivers us from the flesh.

1 Corinthians 3:4

For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? That is the old world, in which everything must be classified. That is certainly so in our days. Everything must go into a box. Then it can be neatly stored away and you know where to find it.

1 Corinthians 3:5

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

What sort of people are they really? There is no strife, conflict, or envying between Paul and Apollos. They serve the same Lord and do fundamentally the same work. In different ways, yes, but then we are already speaking of the outward.

Paul and Apollos are not lords, not masters under whom one ranges oneself, but ministers. They are not church princes to whom one assigns oneself according to choice. They are ministers by whom the Corinthians came to faith.

1 Corinthians 3:6

I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

The Lord gave to Paul that he should plant and to Apollos that he should water. That planting and watering means nothing if there is no increase. God gives that increase. We form part of God's building, over which some are again appointed as shepherds. They can give the food for growth, but God gives that increase.

1 Corinthians 3:7

So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

It is not about Paul or Apollos, but about God.

1 Corinthians 3:8

Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

Paul and Apollos are one. They are involved in the same labour. In husbandry, namely. They are God's fellow-labourers. They are fellow-labourers with one another, but also fellow-labourers in the service of God, of course. It is not that Paul, Apollos, and God are one another's fellow-labourers. Paul and Apollos are servants of God and both are involved in the husbandry, both in different functions. Paul was first in Corinth and preached the gospel there first. Then he left, and only afterwards did Apollos come there, to whom, incidentally, things still had to be explained more accurately. It will undoubtedly have been the case that some preferred to listen to Paul rather than to Apollos, but as we go further in these epistles, we come to the conclusion that in fact hardly anyone wanted to listen to him. The reason for that is that he went further. He did not stay merely with the milk, as though: once you have come to faith, everything is sorted. No, that is only where it begins. After that one should run the course. Nevertheless, where one makes a distinction between Paul and Apollos, one is oriented towards outward things. That one prefers to listen to one rather than the other may perhaps be so, but that one identifies oneself with it to the point of saying one is of this

one or of that one is ridiculous, for we are God's property. As believers we have submitted ourselves to Him and to no one else.

The church is God's building. That is a structure on which building is taking place. God uses personnel for that, but we are all involved in it. Paul changes to a different figure in the next verse: from husbandry to the building of a house. There is a good reason for that, for in general the church is described as a building, a spiritual house, namely a temple. A building in which the Spirit dwells; a house that bears priestly responsibility. For it is a house of priests. The church is after all a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5). You see that Peter teaches exactly the same things as the apostle Paul. The consequence of that is that if we are God's building, then God has a right to our lives, and He is the one who gives content to those lives. You cannot come with that in the world. According to the flesh you must be able to show to which denomination you have attached yourself, for here you must be classified so that you can be put in a box.

But for us it applies: religion: none;

As believers we bear individual responsibility for our lives, also for our walk. We shall also individually be rewarded for that, which means that we shall individually have to give account to the Lord. Then you cannot get away with membership of some denomination or other. That is of no significance to Him, and if all is well, to us neither. Christ the foundation of salvation

1 Corinthians 3:9

For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

In the first chapters Paul speaks of the world over against God. That is a long introduction to indicate that the church, and thus also the individual believer, is not built up from the wisdom of the world but from the wisdom of God. The growth of the church and of the individual believer is God's work. God gives the increase. He that planteth and he that watereth are one. They are one another's fellow-labourers. They are active in the same work and will also individually receive reward for it, according to that labour. Paul and Apollos are God's fellow-labourers. The idea is not that they are fellow-labourers with God, but that they are one another's fellow-labourers and both stand in the service of God. That appears from the grammatical cases used in Greek. They are one another's fellow-labourers. For they are one, not in the service of the world, but in the service of God Himself.

2 Corinthians 6:1

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

That can indeed happen, that you have received the grace of God in vain. In simple evangelical jargon that is rather more complicated, for then the question soon arises whether, once you have received grace from God and thus eternal life, you can lose that eternal life again. Eternal life is after all for ever? Of course there are people who claim that it is not for ever unless you do your best, for otherwise you lose that eternal life again. They use passages like this for that. This misunderstanding stems from the idea that the purpose of a believer's life consists in receiving eternal life. What can you do to receive eternal life? In the Roman Catholic Church this soon became: "Pay and do what I say." Then you never know for sure whether you are really saved, for if people

determine whether you have received eternal life, then by their caprice you can just as easily lose it again. In Calvinism it works much the same. One does not know whether one is saved. What must one do for it? At any rate pay one's church tax, for that comes with it if one becomes a member of a denomination. In some churches one must even become a member not merely of an organisation, but of the organisation. Outside that organisation there is certainly no salvation. Do you know for sure afterwards? No, for you must also do your best and keep to church law and the statutes. It therefore always remains a hot issue. You cannot just say that you are a child of God. In evangelical circles people say that once you come to faith, you are sure of your salvation, but then you run into Scripture passages that say someone has received the grace in vain. What is one to do with that? That sows doubt.

It therefore rests on a misunderstanding, for the purpose is not that someone is saved or born again, but that someone bears fruit. That you have been made useful to serve God and actually do so in the practice of your life. That may not be your life's purpose, but it is God's purpose with your life: that you should walk acceptably to God. That can of course only happen after you have first been born again. New birth is not the end point, but the starting point. Birth is never the end point, and thus neither is new birth. If you have received the grace in vain, that does not mean you have not been born again, but that you have been born again and received the Spirit and everything that goes with it, but do nothing with it. Then you have received the grace in vain. That is what it is about.

This is also what threatens the Corinthians. Whether they have been born again is not in question. The words in 1 Corinthians 1:1–9 are clear enough. The epistle is written to believers, but those believers evidently do not live out of faith and thus out of the wisdom of God, but out of the wisdom of men. Then in practice you have received the grace of God in vain. Enough on that for now.

The fellow-labourers are active in agriculture and house-building. Better still is temple-building. Those are two metaphors used to denote the church and God's work upon it. In the first place it is described as husbandry, in line with the preceding verses. In other places that is called sowing. In the parable of the seed the seed is sown, but through circumstances the seed springs up but then withers. The soil is not deep enough, the ground too dry, and the bottom too rocky. The seed springs up but then withers and thus comes to nothing. If you wish you can deduce from that that someone who has been born again can still be lost. The seed does have an effect, for it springs up, but then withers and thus becomes nothing. Yet it is not about whether the seed springs up, but whether it bears fruit. The parable is not to be understood if one does not grasp that it concerns bearing fruit. For that the seed must of course first spring up. It does so, but it bears no fruit. That therefore concerns God's husbandry.

For the occasion the apostle Paul switches to another metaphor, namely that of a building. For the building of a temple—for that is what it concerns—a foundation must first be laid. That corresponds to the planting or sowing in the previous metaphor. The church is therefore described as a building. You also find such a double expression in Colossians 2:7.

Colossians 2:6

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Rooted and built up = husbandry and building work, namely a temple. Ye are God's building. One may also think here of the Lord's own statement: "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18), so that you know who that wise man is who builds his house upon the rock: Christ Himself.

1 Corinthians 3:10

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

Paul was the masterbuilder, the executor. Not the architect, for the design comes from God. Paul carries that out. He must of course have understanding of the matter and is therefore a wise masterbuilder. He has laid the foundation. No one else therefore needs to do that any more. That specific work is finished, and the responsibility of the Corinthians, or possibly of Apollos, was therefore not that of foundation-layer. That cannot be, for the foundation has been laid. Paul was the first to preach the gospel in Corinth.

Paul speaks in Ephesians 2 of how Jews and Gentiles, however different they were by origin, have through faith become partakers of the same church. There is only one. There is only one building and only one foundation. Paul says:

Ephesians 2:18

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.¹⁹ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Fellow-partakers of the household of God. Not merely household members of God. The word "household" is weakened here in translation. It says "partakers of God's household."

Ephesians 2:20

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

The foundation of the house has been laid by the apostles and prophets. The chief corner stone of the building is Jesus Christ. He is the capstone of the building. In Psalm 118 it says the stone has become the head of the corner, here understood as chief corner stone. Head means it is at the top. It is the summit of the building. If one imagines a shape, it is a pyramid.

It therefore concerns the household of God, which is built upon a foundation. The foundation is called the foundation of the apostles and prophets. In practice this means that these apostles and prophets laid this foundation in the past. That is why we no longer have apostles and prophets in our days. We no longer need them, for apostles and prophets are foundation-layers, and the foundation was laid long ago.

Apostles and prophets = apostles who were also prophets.

Not all prophets were apostles, but all apostles were prophets. Agabus was a prophet but not an apostle (Acts 11:28; 21:10). The so-called apostolic authority is of course derived from the fact that they were prophets. God spoke directly to and through them. Mark was a prophet. He has left us a Gospel, but he was not an apostle. Mark was a servant of Paul and of Peter.

1 Corinthians 3:11

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. The foundation was laid by the apostles and prophets, but the foundation itself is Jesus Christ.

In the last verses of Hebrews 5, just as in the first verses of 1 Corinthians 3, milk and solid food are spoken of. Solid food has to do with the present position and work of Christ, while milk has to do with how a sinner is saved, with the basis of the gospel.

Hebrews 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

We were here briefly already. Soon in 1 Corinthians 3 it will be about how we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. The idea of the judgment seat of Christ we encounter in the following verses of 1 Corinthians 3.

It concerns milk and solid food. In connection with that the apostle says...

Hebrews 6:1

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works. This sentence is a linguistic error in translation.

The word foundation is the normal word for foundation = themelios.

Laying = kataballo = to throw down. Our word "ball" comes from there. It is the same word for the casting down of Satan in Revelation 12.

The translation should therefore have read: not again casting down the foundation of repentance from dead works. The foundation has been laid.

Paul says that we now go on to build upon the foundation, but without casting down the foundation we have laid. The foundation is the beginning of the doctrine of Christ. We go on to maturity, but in doing so we do not throw away the foundation we have laid. We build upon it.

The foundation has been laid. It is complete, and one should leave it in peace henceforth. It is the basis for what follows now.

The rest of this section has already been briefly discussed.

We have been born again through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have died, been buried, and raised with Him. The intention now is that life should be lived from there. The intention is that we should learn to use our gift and thus learn to bear our responsibility.

Back now to 1 Corinthians 3.

1 Corinthians 3:11

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. That is the responsibility of every individual believer.

It continues with imagery. He does not say what one should do, or what your or my gift consists in.

1 Corinthians 3:12

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

It is about building upon the foundation, not beside it.

Gold, silver, and precious stones are noble materials. They are considered relatively imperishable. Peter says that gold perishes, but within this old creation gold, silver, and precious stones stand for imperishable things. Those are valuable and lasting matters. One can also build with wood, hay, and stubble. There are whole tribes who build their houses with wood, hay, and stubble. You weave some branches with straw together and plaster it with mud. That is how one builds a house. If it is too difficult to make it square, you make it round. Then you have no corners at all. Then it is called a rondavel. One can therefore perfectly well build with wood, hay, and stubble, but such houses do not last long. They are not destined for eternal life. Moreover, they are extremely flammable. Gold, silver, and precious stones stand for eternal things, for the power of God, for lasting things, for the power of imperishable life.

Wood, hay, and stubble stand for human work. People make bricks from clay or mud. It must be cheap, so mud is increasingly mixed with straw. That was so in Egypt. That is the slave labour of man. In the end nothing remains of it.

One of the problems we have is that sometimes we do not know whether something is gold, silver, or precious stones, or wood, hay, and stubble. That is what most usual church quarrels are about, because people do not know the distinction in practice. In such circumstances there is always one comfort, for whatever one builds with, it will eventually become clear what one has built with. The whole lot will one day go up in flames, and then it will be seen what withstands the fire. Gold, silver, and precious stones will come out of the fire and no longer be darkened or hidden, or covered by wood, hay, or stubble. Perhaps it is only one golden pin in a haystack, but you know how to search for a golden pin in a haystack. You simply set the whole thing ablaze, and the golden pin comes to light of its own accord.

That is also how silver paper used to be separated from ordinary paper. What is perishable disappears in the fire. The imperishable comes out again. It becomes truly tragic when you set the haystack on fire and really nothing remains—not even a golden pin. May that not happen to you, for Paul says you will regret it.

At any rate, wood, hay, and stubble looks like something, it works easily, but it does not endure. With wood, hay, and stubble one should think of everything that proceeds from the wisdom of the world. That also immediately implies that everything consisting of gold, silver, and precious stones proceeds from the wisdom of God. Those two things stood over against each other earlier. That is apparently still the case here.

1 Corinthians 3:13

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

Of every individual. Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon (verse 10).

Every man's work shall be made manifest. Not what we have done together, but our individual contribution to and in God's work.

The day shall declare it. What has that day to do with it? Day = judgment. Day = light, as opposed to night for darkness. When something is brought to light, it is in order to judge. That is why misdeeds are called works of darkness. They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. If the works are not evil, there is no problem in bringing them to the day. Then they are reproved by the light = exposed.

Day is also the designation of the court and judgment in general. Luther, for example, had to appear before the Diet at Worms. That is the court at Worms. A few years later there was the fire in the Reichstag in Berlin. The day is the court. That is why one is summoned before the court. From the bailiff one receives a summons. Then one must appear before the court. Bring it before the day. Let us see it. Submit it for judgment. The judgment shall declare it, for it is revealed by fire. Then wood, hay, and stubble are burned away.

What sort every man's work is, the fire shall try.

1 Corinthians 3:14

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Suffer loss = the accounting term for loss.

But he himself shall be saved. It therefore does not concern someone's personal salvation as such, but whether someone receives reward. That is also called salvation and preservation. That makes it somewhat difficult to indicate. They are two different things. One is born again and is then expected to serve the Lord under the New Covenant. For that God has made us competent. For what is produced in works in our new life we receive reward, if that work at least consisted of gold, silver, and precious stones; if that work at least proceeded from God's work in us. If not, then it disappears, for everything that proceeds from this old creation will disappear. That is why it is pointless to be occupied within the frameworks of this old creation. It disappears anyway.

One then forfeits reward, as it is called, for example, in the second epistle of John. We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ.

Romans 14:10

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Every one shall give account for himself to God.

In 2 Corinthians 3 and 4 it is said that we have been made competent to be ministers of the new covenant. We should not be negligent as ministers of the new covenant.

Moreover, it may be hard work, but...

2 Corinthians 4:17

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

Reward, namely. We shall one day in the future receive a heavenly body. The intention is that this body should not be naked, but preferably clothed or, better still, overclothed. It concerns glory that can be seen on the outside and is regarded as reward. We can imagine little of it. But that we shall receive reward and that that glory shall be manifested to us is a clear matter. That is why it also says...

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

If it is bad, it may have been well intended, but it was wood, hay, and stubble. The good is of course gold, silver, and precious stones.

It is according to works. With unbelievers it concerns works of unbelief, and with believers works of faith. With unbelievers it concerns punishment, and with believers reward. It naturally concerns the amount thereof.

Do our works therefore contribute to our salvation? Not to our new birth, but to the salvation of the soul, yes.

With that all the relevant Scripture passages have in fact been explained. Our lives are therefore indeed of importance for our eternal position.

One can suffer loss, but oneself one shall be saved, yet so as by fire. In that manner.

1 Corinthians 3:16

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

Know ye not...

This is used many times in this epistle.

- 1 Corinthians 5:6
- Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?
- 1 Corinthians 6:2
- Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? 1 Corinthians 6:3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels?
- 1 Corinthians 6:9
- Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?
- 1 Corinthians 6:15
- Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?
- 1 Corinthians 6:16
- What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body?
- 1 Corinthians 6:19
- What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?
- 1 Corinthians 9:13
- Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple?
- 1 Corinthians 9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?

In other words, they knew very little. They should have known those things. The apostle at any rate assumes them to be known and calls them up again. Know ye not... No, they were wise according to worldly standards. These biblical truths evidently played no significant role with the Corinthians. In the epistle to the Romans it is the other way round: We know..., or even stronger: We are persuaded... We know those things because God has revealed them to us.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit dwelleth in you? That is twice the same thing. A temple is the place where God dwells. If we are a temple, that therefore means that God in some way dwells in us. We are probably familiar with this thought, although this expression is often not understood.

In the first place, as it stands here, “ye” is plural. You cannot see that in modern English. Sometimes you can, when it says “ye all.” That it is plural appears from the second part of the sentence, for there it says that the Spirit dwelleth in you (plural). “Ye” and “you” are plural, but the temple is singular. Unfortunately our language use is no longer so precise. What is said here is that the believers together form one temple. The church is that temple.

That it can also be said that every believer is such a temple is true and does occur, but that is not the normal thought. The normal thought is that the church is one temple. Peter says that we are living stones and are built up as living stones with that one Stone into a spiritual house, into a temple. Namely into a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2). Those loose stones form part of the temple. You can point to them and say: “That is the temple,” but only as they form part of the whole. In theory it may be that every believer forms part of it, but theory is not interesting; it concerns practice. The question therefore is whether in our practical life we form part of that temple. If we shut ourselves off from the whole and lead a life outside any church connection and church responsibility, then in practice we are simply loose stones, and to point to them and say that that is the temple is then a fatal misunderstanding, for of course it is not so. If people therefore say that our body is a temple, then it remains to be seen whether this is so. That is a fine theory, but that is not what it is about. It concerns practice. That this is how it is appears from the following Scripture passage...

Hebrews 3:2

Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

Afterwards it is said that we form part of another house. Then it says...

Hebrews 3:4

For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

6 But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

We are that house, but a condition is attached to it. The expression “hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” is repeated some six times.

Hebrews 3:14

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

We are His house, if at least we hold fast this beginning firm unto the end. It is not theory but practice. The epistle to the Hebrews was written to indicate that we as believers do not live under the ordinances of the Old Covenant but under those of the New Covenant—not under Moses but under Christ, not under Aaron but under Christ, the High Priest of the New Covenant.

Holding fast to these principles means that we indeed stand in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. That expression comes from the epistle to the Galatians, but that epistle has exactly the same purport: that we are saved by grace and therefore should also live by grace—not under the law and not under the Old Covenant.

Paul therefore says that we are indeed His house, but only if we actually live according to the principles of that house, under the house rules of that house. At the same time one must not also want to live under the house rules of the law, for then one does not

really belong to it—at least not in practice. One may well claim to be a minister of the New Covenant, but if one performs no priestly work as a priest of the New Covenant, then one has no right to say so. One is a priest by birth. That has consequences. One can only truly say one is a priest if one actually performs priestly work. One may have a bicycle repair diploma, but if one does not make bicycles, how can one be a bicycle repairer? One may say one is a minister of the New Covenant, but that is only true if one actually practises it. That is stated here, and the whole epistle is a call to place oneself in practice under the New Covenant and to draw near to the throne of grace, the throne of the King and High Priest of the New Covenant.

We have been placed in liberty. Let us therefore stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Let us not suffer any other yoke to be put upon us, but serve one another by love.

We have therefore become partakers of Christ, if indeed it is true that we hold fast that beginning unto the end.

Hebrews 4:14

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

One may well claim that we have a High Priest, but that profits nothing if one does not also let oneself be cleansed by Him and report to Him for the service of God.

Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

Hebrews 12:28

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Back to Hebrews 3:6.

Christ is faithful as Son and Heir over His own house, whose house we are, if... It does not say: "If we have been born again," for that is only the theory, but: "If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." If we actually live out of that and place ourselves under the house rules of this house, of this temple.

1 Timothy 3:14

These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly:

15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

How one ought to behave in the house of God. What may be expected of the household members of God. That is to say, what the Lord expects of us in this house.

The living God = the working, the active God.

A pillar and ground of the truth = the first responsibility of the church is that the church should practise the truth, preserve it, live it out, and thus also live practically according to it. The temple is the temple, of course because God dwells therein, but also because the word of God is preserved and spoken therein. The essence of the temple is the holy of holies. There stands the ark of the covenant. That is the centre of the whole structure. In it are preserved the two stone tables, as a figure of the word of God. We as the temple of God have the responsibility to preserve the word of God.

We are a temple, living stones built upon that one Stone. Thereby we are a priestly people, and the responsibility of the priests was to preserve the word of God. That is therefore in general the responsibility of the church now, also here on earth. We are that priestly people appointed by God to preserve His word and thus to preach and minister it. That was the function of Israel in Old Testament times, but also their function after their conversion, at the coming again of Christ. In the meantime that is our position as the people of God.

We are the house of God. That we ought to know.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

Ye are therefore expected to preserve the wisdom of God and not the wisdom of men.

Insofar as one preserves that wisdom, we should walk accordingly and thus also work accordingly. For those good works one will also receive reward. That is what the Lord expects of every believer. No one can say he is not competent for it. One can at least accept the word of God and live out of it. If one thinks one is too stupid for that, one still has no excuse, for if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God (James 1:5).

We have received the Spirit of God that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Our competence is of God, who hath made us able ministers of the new testament. One therefore never has any excuse.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?

Know ye not that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

1 Corinthians 3:17

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

Whoever defiles the temple of God shall be destroyed by God and thus suffer loss. The temple of God is holy = consecrated to God. The temple stands in the service of God, and God takes care of His things. He does not simply allow that temple to be damaged. Apparently not all members have a positive share in the church, for if we damage that work of God, that is obviously a negative contribution. This is not written to unbelievers but to those who form part of the temple. One can indeed damage the church from within the church.

Their word will eat as doth a canker (2 Timothy 2:17). That is not cheerful. That concerns born-again people who do not support the work but cause damage. That comes from the devil. He naturally tries to oppose the whole thing as much as possible. The warning is that we should not let ourselves be used for that, for if we damage the temple of God, then God will damage us. Not that we are then no longer saved, but that we forfeit reward and glory. One might end up walking naked for ever. Eternity lasts quite a long time.

1 Corinthians 3:18 -23

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

21 Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;

22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;

23 And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

The wisdom of God has to do with unity. The intention is that this creation should go from multiplicity to unity. There have been great men who have tried to bring the world under one government and one religion. After the Second World War people said: "Never again," but within the shortest time it happened again, while in the meantime a League of Nations had been established. After the Second World War one could no longer manage with that League of Nations. Since then it has been called the United Nations, and people stubbornly speak of the international community, but everyone knows there is only division in the world.

The wisdom of God is so much higher than the wisdom of the world that the latter could easily be called foolishness. Instead people speak of the breadth of man and the foolishness of God, but that unity will never come about through human philosophy. There is indeed a wisdom of God, but it is concealed from the world and exists in a mystery which the princes of this world knew not. That wisdom is not revealed to us by the spirit of the world but by the Spirit which is of God. That Spirit we have received that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

Even within Christendom this is reasoned away. Some even say they have received the Holy Spirit in order to be able to speak in tongues. Others say they have received the Spirit so that we might lay hands on one another. People have forgotten what it really concerns.

He is the Spirit of truth that He might guide us into all truth. He is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

The Corinthians knew little because they had been instructed by men according to worldly principles and human philosophy. They had been taught by the world and are therefore regarded by Paul as children, as babes in Christ. They had been fed with milk, but that is only an introduction. One must quickly move on from that to solid food, otherwise things will not go well. Paul complains that these Corinthians were still babes and could not bear the solid food, the wisdom of God.

He then says that we form part of something quite different. We have not suddenly become good people, or people as God intended them, worthy members of society, but we have been added to a temple. The word "join" or "add" is the right word here. We are God's husbandry; we are God's building. Or know ye not that ye are the temple of God? Because the church is collectively regarded as a temple, that has consequences, and because thereby every individual believer can also be regarded as a temple, that too has consequences.

One must beware of unsaturated fatty acids. One must not smoke either, otherwise the Lord would have given us a chimney. People usually get no further than such matters, which are also popular in society. One finds a Bible text for it, adds some pious-sounding language, and then it all seems very devout and Christian. Yet that is no wisdom of God but wisdom of the world, only using some biblical terminology. What one can always use is that one must be a good steward, for that is biblical. Yet our whole capitalist society revolves around that. But we belong neither to the left nor to the right nor to the centre; we are not progressive, not collective, but we are of another order. We do not belong at all. We are a temple of God built upon a foundation once laid. Upon that foundation we are being built, and moreover we ourselves are expected

to build upon that foundation. If we must build on something, then on that temple of God, upon that foundation and with the prescribed building materials. That is not wood, hay, and stubble but gold, silver, and precious stones. One day this structure will go up in flames, and all wood, hay, and stubble will disappear. Thus in the end one finds the gold, silver, and precious stones again.

We are involved in the building of a work of God. That is not subject to worldly wisdom.

That is what it is about. That is what Paul tries to make clear to those Corinthians.

The wisdom of this world will perish, but in fact has already perished. Chapter 1 was about that, and at the end of chapter 3 Paul returns to it. In other words, he makes no progress, but it is a lengthy introduction to the essence of this epistle. The tragedy of these epistles is that they are usually used in exactly the wrong way, namely applied to the earthly circumstances of believers. What Paul actually sets out is that all those matters he mentions later in the epistle are of no importance in the work of the Lord. They do not belong there. They are things one should have somewhat in order so as not to suffer too much hindrance from them. One should withdraw from them as much as possible. This is not my world; I do not belong here. We should go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. There the tent of meeting is built. And as for Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, Paul says they are no church princes so that one cannot name oneself after them. They are ministers of the church (deacons), for they are ministers of Christ. Moreover they are stewards of the mysteries of God.

Warning against pride

1 Corinthians 4:1

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

“Stewards” here translates the Greek word *oikonomos*, which refers to a household manager or steward entrusted with overseeing a household. This term is connected to *oikonomia*, meaning administration, stewardship, or economy (in the sense of orderly management of a household). The “mysteries of God” refer to the mystery of God mentioned earlier in 1 Corinthians 2:1 and 2:7—namely, the wisdom of God in a mystery, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: the hidden wisdom that God predetermined for us before the ages began. The Corinthians did not want to hear about this mystery, but Paul insists that they are, in fact, stewards of these mysteries of God—and thus of God’s hidden wisdom.

1 Corinthians 4:2

Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

A servant of Christ is expected above all to be found faithful. Faithful to whom? To the One who appointed him, of course. Good staff are not merely those who perform tasks well, but those who prove trustworthy, regardless of the specific duties. Faithfulness means the employer can rely upon them. Thus the servant carries real responsibility. Recall the parable of the pounds (or talents): the Lord showed interest in His servants only upon His return. To the faithful servant He said, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant...” The servant is deemed good because he was faithful—not because of the precise results he achieved. One servant may produce more yield than another; that has always been the case, even though it runs counter to socialist ideals. People are

simply very different. What one person can do, another cannot—and what another does, the first may do far better, or perhaps just as well but much more quickly. Human beings are not all equal. Each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Romans 14:10

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Romans 14:12

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Romans 14:13

Let us not therefore judge one another any more...

We bear personal responsibility directly to the Lord, not to one another. Not even to Paul, Apollos, or Cephas. Such hierarchies exist in the world and may even serve a purpose there. In the world, unity must be organised and managed because it does not naturally exist; hence managers are sent to impose it. But does it truly work? That is the world: fighting against windmills. In the new creation, of which we have become partakers, things are different. We do not need to become one in Christ. The Lord did not pray to you and me when He said, “that they all may be one.” We do not need to fulfil that prayer; it has already been answered. We are one in Christ. The problem is that the Corinthians refused to acknowledge it. The problem today is that the majority of those who call themselves Christians refuse to acknowledge this unity. That is why people feel compelled to merge denominations. It is just like the world, where everything must merge. But as children of God, we do not need to become one—we already are one. If you think we are divided, then things will never be put right. We are one in Christ, and He will accomplish His work in us. He will teach us and instruct us in the principles of the new creation; He will make known to us the mystery of His will; He has appointed stewards of the mysteries; He has given us the Spirit so that we might know the things freely given to us by God. We thus learn that we are one in Christ, inseparably joined together, that His blood, His life, and His Spirit dwell in us, and that He desires to educate us, give us a place, and entrust us with responsibility within the whole Body of the Church. This is the Church as the temple in which we are placed as living stones. What is expected of us is that we be faithful and submit to the Word of God—that we keep silent and listen. This stands in direct opposition to what society demands and what is taught in schools today: we are supposed to speak up loudly, be assertive, and stand up for ourselves—because no one else will do it for us. In the Church, the opposite is true. We are to be quiet; we have entered into rest. The Lord said, Exodus 14:14 The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. We are to lead a quiet and peaceable life. We need not develop our own philosophy. God reveals His wisdom to us, and we are to accept it. That requires faith. Another word for it is humility. You will not get far with that in the world—but since when were we supposed to get far in the world?

1 Corinthians 4:3

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

“It is a very small thing” to Paul—he couldn’t care less. The Corinthians were judging him, but it meant nothing to him. “Judged” here means to examine or investigate, as a court does before delivering a verdict. It supposedly concerns the search for truth. Yet

for a worldly court it is a thankless task, for the world by definition suppresses the truth. In any case, the Corinthians were investigating Paul. They wanted rid of the man; they did not want his message. Just as it often happens today, so it was then: if you cannot refute someone's preaching or message, you attack the person instead. That is bound to succeed, because all people are sinners. The trick is to gather as much dirt as possible about their sins and spread it abroad. The Corinthians did the same to Paul (though naturally without the internet). They undoubtedly used other methods. The point was never whether the stories were true, but whether they had the desired effect of bringing the person down. If you have been properly brought up, you know the rule: hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil. Paul, at any rate, paid no attention to it. He did not even judge himself.

1 Corinthians 4:4

For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Each one stands or falls to his own master.

The One with the right to judge is the Master—the Lord who may judge His servants, or the King who may judge His subjects. If the subjects are submissive, things will go well for them. Paul does not even judge himself. This runs completely contrary to worldly wisdom. The world says, “Know thyself,” but if there is one thing a human being is incapable of, it is truly knowing himself. That is why psychology was invented. It concerns knowledge of human nature, education, and especially etiquette (the “small ethics,” the minor rules of how we treat one another). A little understanding of people is useful, but to call it psychology? Psychology claims to deal with the so-called inner man, but we know nothing of that—not of others, and only superficially of ourselves. There is good reason for this: man was not created to look inward, but outward. Nor was he created to look backward. Looking sideways is about as far as it goes. Looking behind causes pain. Our eyes face forward, yet suddenly we are told to look inward. We cannot do it. Those who insist we must do it anyway do it for us—and we call them psychologists. When someone consults a psychologist about a problem, the psychologist asks what the person thinks about it. If the person had any real insight, he would not have gone in the first place. The psychologist has no real insight either. There are at least as many schools of psychology as there are psychologists. Thus we should not judge ourselves either. We do not even know what we are doing, let alone why we do it or what our motives are. Suppose we knew a little—would it make us happy? Probably not. If you want to ruin life, start dissecting it. Do not cut into it. Try putting it back together again. Young boys learn this lesson: they dismantle everything to see how it works, but when they try to reassemble it, it no longer functions. If you understand everything in life, the challenge, beauty, and charm vanish. A specialist in painting no longer finds any painting beautiful. If you know everything about music, you no longer listen to music—you listen to technique. Therefore a person should not judge himself. As for righteous judgment, we find too little truth to base any verdict upon a search for truth. Knowing oneself is pointless. The Lord will judge in the future, and we should let Him teach us. Through His teaching we come not to knowledge of ourselves, but to knowledge of Christ—to know Him and the power of His resurrection. “For I know nothing by myself” means Paul is unaware of much that goes on in his subconscious. Yet this does not mean there will be no judgment or that he is justified; rather, the Lord will judge.

1 Corinthians 4:5

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

“Bring to light” means to bring forth into daylight, as before a court. He knows us and what is in our hearts. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. That will be judged. If you then receive praise, it will be from God—and that means something. In verses 1–5 Paul speaks about himself, Apollos, and Cephas (though here he leaves Cephas out for some reason).

1 Corinthians 4:6

And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

Paul was actually speaking about the Corinthians, but he literally applied it to himself. The point is that we should take example from Paul and Apollos. Paul is the role model for the whole Church, and thus for all believers. What applies to the Corinthians, he has applied to himself so that they might learn from the example. It applies to all believers. Human judgment should not concern us. If it does not concern us, then neither will judging others. “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” If you have even a little self-knowledge, you will be wise enough not to judge others, for God will measure you by the same standard you use on them. If we are to judge at all, it will be in the future: “Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” That is when our earthly house—this tabernacle—is dissolved, and we have a building of God, when we are all manifested before the judgment seat of Christ and receive according to what we have done in the body. In the days of Christ’s return we shall be involved with Him in establishing and maintaining the Messianic Kingdom. We have been called as firstfruits for that purpose. While we are still on earth, we are to be taught, trained, to learn and gain experience. When we were born into this world, we knew nothing at all. Much goes wrong, but if you pay attention, you learn from it. At the very least you can learn that human judgment means nothing; it is culturally conditioned and arises from structures in the mind. To God it means absolutely nothing. The same applies in the world: do not worry too much about what others think; follow your own course. What matters for us is learning to be humble. “That ye might learn in us” means one should see it in them. “Not to think of men above that which is written” — what is written certainly stands above feeling. In worldly philosophy, feeling and emotion have been made into religion. That is what it is all about. In some church gatherings feelings are stirred up, and people enjoy it. But that is not the intention. Feelings in themselves are not wrong, but there is something higher than feelings: the Word of God. As we are taught, gain knowledge and experience, those feelings become directed—not so much developed as brought under control. We are to learn not to think above what is written, so that no one is puffed up for one against another. Why do people belittle others? Why trample them down? Those who do so want to exalt themselves above others. That is difficult, because they do not rise an inch off the ground. When that fails, they pull everyone else down instead. That is why our society is going to ruin. The small cannot become great, so the great must be

made small. Since the small are by definition in the majority, everything is levelled. Woe to anyone who sticks his head above the parapet. That is the socialist ideal, but these things happen in Christianity too. If anyone ever stuck His head above the parapet, it was the Lord Jesus. He has been shot down for 2000 years. He would elevate humanity, but guess what—people do not want it. Everything must remain equal. From the beginning of the world, all things continue as they were. For that purpose the theory of evolution was invented. During the French Revolution, people stuck their heads above the parapet, so the guillotine was invented to prevent it. The French Revolution is the great norm for modern society. If you do not accept the principle of equality, you have learned nothing from the French Revolution. Yet you should have done, for that is the highest good of modern man—they have made it into a god. The point, however, is not that we measure ourselves against one another, let alone measure others by our own standards (which are not worth much). The point is that we submit to the measure of Christ. In Romans 12 Paul says we should be wise unto sobriety—not to think more highly than we ought. Here it says we should not think above what is written, so that we are not puffed up. What seems great is usually hollow—or like the man with dropsy (Luke 14:2 And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy). The Lord “squeezed him out” and brought him back to normal proportions—much smaller—and then he was healed. The problem is that we want to become so great, but since we cannot, we pretend to be greater than we are. That does not help with the Lord. Be small, be humble, be servant-like. In that position we are receptive to the Lord. There we can be taught by Him, so that He can one day say to us, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant!” He has a plan for our lives. Everything we make of it and meddle with only stands in the way. That is what Paul wanted to teach these Corinthians. But what then about immorality in the Church? What about the injustice done to us? Come now—the whole world is full of injustice. Are you wronged? What did you expect? You do the same to others. That is how the world works. What about lawsuits? And marriage? Whose marriage—yours or mine? You would not believe how many books have been written about it. Why so much? Because the ideal does not exist. The two were to become one flesh, but they never will; they always remain two. We know it ought to be, but it cannot be. We have it as an ideal, but in this world it is unattainable. The world is full of compromises. It is broken, it is sin, it is separation. Ideals exist only to point the direction, not to be achieved. You may strive for them, but you must accept they cannot be reached. Paul wrote a long chapter on marriage, and then thick books were written about that chapter—because it helps nothing. It remains endless nagging about marriage, which is a pity, for it contributes to devaluing marriage. Then occultism threatens us, of course—and books are written about that too. The Lord’s Supper is a hot topic in Christianity, and spiritual gifts likewise. Discussion, discussion, discussion. Paul says: That is the old world. Sort it out. Done. Finished. And then it only begins. When you put those things in order and accept that you suffer wrong, only then can you be taught and can it be expected that you will one day mature. Sometimes it seems people refuse to settle these matters—which could be dealt with in a few words—because they do not want to grow up. That is why they keep endlessly arguing about the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, and all those other things described in Hebrews 6 as milk. The apostle’s call, today as much as ever, is naturally to leave all those things aside and to recognise that the fellowship we have with the Lord and with one another is not based on a shared culture, nor on some code of etiquette we have

mutually agreed upon. It is not that we are all such refined people, whether equal or unequal, but our fellowship is in Christ. That means we have died to the world, to sins, and to the law, and have become a new creation in Christ. This fellowship exists because of the common future we have—in glory, glorified, with Christ. As long as we are here, those differences remain, but they are to a very large extent the differences of this world. We shall be rid of them in due course. It is simply a matter of time. We ought to anticipate that reality and live from it already. Then we should also accept that even when all those worldly differences have disappeared, we shall still be different when we are with the Lord. Even then we shall have different functions, yet even then we shall be to one another as hand and foot. In short, we each stand in an individual relationship to the Lord; we are a motley company, certainly by human standards, but because each of us is individually united to the living God, because we have been reconciled to Him in Christ, we are therefore joined to one another and married to one another. That sometimes produces tensions, but also many positive things; in any case, it yields fruitful cooperation. It is therefore wise to fix your gaze on the future and simply forget all those other matters. Do not let yourself be gripped by the cares of this life or by the things that are seen. Pay no attention to what people think, but ask yourself whether your life is well-pleasing to God—whether you are faithful to the Lord, whether you stand in His service, whether you form part of that temple, whether you live from that blessed hope of the appearing in glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Our position in the world is limited. Officially, it is not in the world at all. To some extent it is, but only moderately so. We are to live soberly in this present world (Titus 2:12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;). For the rest, Christ has delivered us from this present evil world (Galatians 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:).

1 Corinthians 4:6

And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

With certain animals this happens. When animals meet one another, they puff themselves up to appear larger than they really are. Think of a peacock's tail or a pigeon's crop. A cat bristles its tail to make an impression. Human beings do the same. They puff themselves up to seem greater than they are. That is pride. People think they amount to something. It is a human failing, but it is also characteristic of the devil. Pride is the invention of the devil. One wants to be greater than anyone else. You find this throughout the whole creation. But Paul says there is no need for it whatsoever.

1 Corinthians 4:7

For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

“Who maketh thee to differ?”—who makes any distinction?

“And what hast thou...?”

There is a great deal behind these words, and they are certainly to be connected with the expression in 1 Corinthians 3:4.

Why all these different distinctions, and what do they receive from all these different apostles—or whoever they were—that they had not already received? What had they not already received from Paul in his preaching, since he was the first to preach the word of God to the Corinthians?

There is nothing to boast about, and no distinctions to be made.

There is one standard, and that is Scripture. We are not to think above what is written, and in so far as any judging or distinguishing is to be done, the Lord Himself will do it.

1 Corinthians 4:8

Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you!

They have already reached their goal. They are already there, and so they are full. They consider themselves rich. In short, without us they have begun to reign.

The word “reign” (like “believe”) is not used only for reigning as such, but also for the beginning of it.

“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13). “After that ye believed”—if you are not careful, you might think it says “after ye ceased believing.” It means “after ye began to believe.”

“Thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned” (Revelation 11:17; cf. Revelation 19:6). That does not mean He has stopped, but that He has begun. It refers there to the beginning of the thousand years.

So when it says here that they have reigned, it means they have already begun to exercise dominion—at least over others. Those Corinthians had an opinion about everything and therefore a judgement on everything. They knew better than everyone else and immediately opposed one another. But Paul says: “It is not yet that far.”

They did it without Paul. He says he took no part in it.

“And I would to God ye did reign”—would that it were so, that we had reached that point.

Then we also might reign with you. The rest of the chapter shows that in reality the situation is the exact opposite.

1 Corinthians 4:9

For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

Apostles are sent ones. Paul belongs to the last of them. After that it stops. There are no apostles now. They were personally sent by the Lord Jesus. They had seen the Lord, or the Lord had appeared to them and sent them forth as apostles. That was only at the beginning of our dispensation. Paul counts himself among the last apostles. He joined late as well. Some want to explain “last” as “least,” but that does not seem to be the meaning here, although Paul did regard himself as the least of the apostles.

God has exhibited them as men condemned to death; they have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. Those angels are the angels of the devil, belonging to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies.

1 Corinthians 4:10

We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised.

We are now in chapter 4, but you should still have chapter 1 in mind. The gospel is foolishness to the world, but wisdom with God. To the world we are not wise but fools, because we stand outside it. The striving to secure a place in the world and to be taken seriously is utterly contrary to our true position and to the will of God to which we are subject.

Paul says they are wise in Christ, but he means precisely the opposite. They pretend to be wise. They behave as though they are.

Paul says they are strong, but they were in fact the very picture of weakness.

1 Corinthians 4:11

Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;

1 Corinthians 4:12

And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

We know that Paul at least worked with his hands during the time he was in Corinth. He did so to set an example for the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 4:13

Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

“Offscouring” means scrapings, refuse.

This is Paul’s testimony. He repeats it several times later. In 2 Corinthians 6 he lists thirty-eight points. Paul does not do this to complain, but to show that this is the position of the believer. If things go better for us, we have been fortunate—but perhaps not, for: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” (James 1:2). We should glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience. In short, this is the normal situation in which a believer may find himself. Today we live in a rather indifferent society and suffer little inconvenience from it, but that will change in due course.

1 Corinthians 4:14

I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.

“Children” here is not in the sense of immature persons (though they were that too), but as those begotten by Paul. Paul had brought them the gospel there, and they had come to faith through him. In that sense they were his children.

1 Corinthians 4:15

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

1 Corinthians 4:16

Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

Paul has every reason to admonish the Corinthians. He not only has the right to do so, but also the duty. Paul feels closely bound to the various churches. He usually longs to visit them again to see how they are faring. In this case he sends Timothy.

There is, after all, the responsibility to care for those churches. Paul has begotten them, and however many people may have come to them telling them this or that and whom they preferred to Paul, it makes little difference to him: the Corinthians are the fruit of his labour, and he therefore has responsibility for them. Hence he writes this letter. He must do so, for he is a steward of the mysteries and is expected to be found faithful. He admonishes the Corinthians and tells them to be his followers.

He does not immediately tell them what to do and what not to do. He does that more or less in the following chapters. Law is for children, and believers sometimes need law. Sometimes people need to be told to do this or that, in the hope that later they will change and be able to order their own lives.

In Ephesians 5:1 Paul says:

“Be ye therefore followers of God.” That is ultimately what it is about.

That does not alter the fact that believers in general are expected to be followers of Christ, but also followers of Paul, for Paul is the pattern for the church and for its members. Paul—with his Roman citizenship, as the apostle to the Gentiles, who everywhere first preached the gospel to the Jews—serves as the model for the church, which does the same. The church is gathered from the Gentiles and has as its first responsibility to bring the gospel back to the Jews. Whether it succeeds is beside the point.

Paul therefore sets himself forward as an example.

1 Corinthians 11:1

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

Philippians 3:17

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

Believers in general are followers of Paul, and the Philippians were to be so together with the others. We are God’s fellow workers. That means Paul and Apollos work together. One cooperates with the other, and the other with the one, in God’s service. “Be followers together of me” means that together with all the others they should be followers of Paul. In his person and ministry he is an example for the church—an example and thus a type. His origin as an apostle was not in Jerusalem but outside it. In the preceding verses of Philippians 3 we indeed read who Paul is: a Jew by birth according to the flesh, but we are not to glory in the flesh. He counted all his Jewishness as loss and dung that he might win Christ. He does one thing: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, he presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore: “Brethren, be followers together of me.”

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature (Galatians 6:15).

1 Thessalonians 1:6

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

1 Thessalonians 1:7

So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

2 Thessalonians 3:9

Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

Back to 1 Corinthians 4.

1 Corinthians 4:16 -17

Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

“Son” = teknon = child, one begotten. From this it must be inferred that Timothy too heard the gospel from Paul. That was on his first missionary journey. When Paul returned to Lystra on his second journey, Timothy is spoken of, and from that moment he travels with Paul. It is also mentioned that his mother was a believer and knew the Scriptures, as did his grandmother. It is to be expected that all three first heard the gospel through the preaching of the apostle Paul. Timothy walked in Paul’s footsteps and is undoubtedly regarded as his successor. In that sense he can be called a son of Paul, though Scripture nowhere states it explicitly.

Nevertheless, the Corinthians are regarded as Paul’s children, and so is Timothy. He is then to visit these Corinthians and probably deliver this letter as well. It will remind them of Paul’s ways—his conduct, his manner of life, which is in Christ. Timothy will remind them not only of his teaching but also of his ways, his doing and living.

1 Corinthians 4:18

Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

The healing of the man with dropsy concerns a man who was puffed up—not with air, but with water.

That puffing up is a picture of religion. Religion fosters pride. Why do people find it so pleasant to be placed under laws? Because it gives them the impression that they can bear it and are therefore strong enough to carry that yoke. That fosters pride. Notice how the heavier the burden under the law, the more people groan under it, yet at the same time they are proud. They feel superior to everyone else, if only because they at least try to some extent to keep the law. That was also true of the Jews. The dropsical man is a picture of Jewish orthodoxy. One must be healed of that. One is full of the word—perhaps even the word of God—but one does nothing with it. Then one becomes puffed up. In 1 Corinthians 8:1 it says that we know that we all have knowledge, but knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. It is not so much what you know, but what you do with that knowledge. Water is not unhealthy, but if you are full of it, it is very unhealthy. You cannot do without it. Then you are thirsty; then you are dead. It must be in due proportion.

In any case, religious people are proud. They believe they have a right to world dominion. Look at Islam. But in Roman Catholicism it is no different. They have their own state, with a ruler and envoys and so on. When the world speaks of Christianity, it thinks first of Roman Catholics. Protestantism comes afterwards.

1 Corinthians 4:17

For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

In 1 Corinthians 11 we read the words of the Lord Jesus: “This do in remembrance of me.” When we hear those words we always think He is now dead. That is of course a fatal misunderstanding. For in chapter 4 too it is about remembering Paul’s ways while he is still alive. It may be an “in memoriam,” but Paul is still living here. Christ, of course, is too.

Some are puffed up and set themselves not only above Scripture but also above the apostolic authority of the apostle Paul. That is why he will come to them shortly. Well—shortly? 1 Corinthians 4:19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

Deo volente—if the Lord will. He will not come to listen to the fine stories they have to tell, but to see the working of the Spirit. For the Spirit is power and brings forth fruit. That is precisely what the Corinthians lack; otherwise this letter would not have been written, as its contents show.

It is questionable whether Paul ever returned to Corinth. As far as we know, he did not. That is why the second letter begins with apologies that he has still not come. If he ever did return, it was probably pointless. Those who want to remain children remain so. They will not be told anything. He writes that too, but in the letter to the Hebrews, in the famous, notorious, and disputed passage in chapter 6, where he says it is impossible to renew to repentance those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost and tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, and have fallen away, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame. Paul says there is nothing to be done about it, and he therefore occupies himself with it no further. That is probably also why Paul never went back to Corinth. Those expressions of Paul in 2 Corinthians 12 about the thorn in the flesh refer to the Corinthians. They are that thorn in the flesh. That he prayed three times about it refers to his plan to keep going to those Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 12:8

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

2 Corinthians 12:14

Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

It is not hard to put these things together. He prayed three times, and now he stands ready for the third time to come to the Corinthians. It is to be feared he will not come. It does not say so, for the impression is given that Paul is seriously intending it. Instead of coming, he writes these letters.

He would therefore come shortly, if the Lord will. When Paul wrote in Romans 15 that he would come to Rome and from there travel to Spain, he did not add “Deo volente.” It appears the Lord did not will that Paul should go again to the Corinthians, because it would probably have been pointless anyway.

But if he comes, it will not be about the words of those who are puffed up, but about the power.

1 Corinthians 4:20

For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

The kingdom of God does not consist in talk, but in power. Here it concerns the words of men. On the other hand, we know that the kingdom of God—or the power of God—comes to us in the words of God.

They were men's words—fine words, literarily correct, perhaps even useful by worldly standards—but that is not the point. The question is whether it is the word of God and thus the power of God.

1 Corinthians 4:21

What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

It says “rod.” It seems the translators somewhat anticipated chapter 5, although the heading there is “Immorality in the Church,” but that is not what it is about. It concerns what we later came to call excommunication and possibly recommunication.

Excommunication means being put out of the communion, out of the fellowship. In practice it apparently meant that one might no longer partake of the Lord's Supper. It is a proverbial chapter on what is called church discipline. And when one speaks of discipline, the word “rod” immediately springs to mind: discipline and rod.

“Shall I come unto you with a rod?” Perhaps the word here is better translated as “sceptre.” Rhabdos. A sceptre is a rod. A sceptre is an expression of power, indeed of life-power. Apart from this verse, the rod is a picture of resurrection power. Staff, rod, and sceptre are words with a double meaning. They express power and thus authority and thus dominion. The officer's baton is a faint reminder of that.

That rod or sceptre in verse 21 seems to concern the authority of Paul as an apostle. Apostles are apostles because they were sent by the Lord Jesus Himself. Thereby they also received authority. That had to be so, for the New Testament books did not yet exist. They had only the Old Testament, and certain things had to be regulated. For that purpose there were apostles and sometimes prophets. They had authority. Paul even publicly rebuked the apostle Peter before the church (Galatians 2). Peter thought it better under the circumstances to keep to Jewish customs and food laws, and Paul rebuked him publicly. He could do that only because he stood in a position higher than Peter's—and Peter was certainly not the least among the apostles. This too indicates that Paul was one of the last apostles chronologically.

“Shall I come unto you with authority, to set things in order, or in love and in the spirit of meekness?” The spirit of meekness deserves preference under all circumstances. Only in the case of an apostle might it occasionally be otherwise, but normally things in the church happen in the spirit of meekness. We esteem others better than ourselves and are to be subject one to another in love. That is the normal situation. Authority belongs to the Lord Himself.

Then the rod appears in the next chapter.

1 Corinthians 5:1

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

Someone has become involved with his mother—or with his father's wife, which is not necessarily the same thing. In any case, it is described as fornication.

1 Corinthians 5:2

And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

That is usually what it comes down to. Someone who sins in this way ought surely to be removed from the midst of the church. The question is what that actually means. That should become clear from the following verses.

1 Corinthians 5:3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, Paul is present with the Corinthians in spirit, and he has already pronounced judgement on this man, excluding him. Excluded from what? He is in effect saying that he wants nothing whatever to do with such a person. And that is where it ends, for what more is there to say?

1 Corinthians 5:4

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

1 Corinthians 5:5

To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Paul has decided to deliver the one who has done this to Satan. The believers in Corinth should have nothing to do with such a person. That is all. There is nothing more to be done. Matters such as the Lord's Supper are not connected with this here—quite apart from the fact that what is discussed in 1 Corinthians 11 points in the opposite direction. There it does speak of eating and drinking unworthily in connection with the Supper, but it does not say that one may not partake of the Supper at all. On the contrary, one should do so and walk accordingly—but that is another subject.

Here the point is that we may all be believers and thus joined to one another in Christ. That does not, however, mean that we must associate with one another in daily life. On occasion it is said: "From such withdraw thyself." One should not wish to have dealings with such a person. We are to purge ourselves from vessels to dishonour. This has nothing whatever to do with what people have made of it—namely, that it concerns membership of a local denomination and the question of whom one should admit or exclude. That is an entirely unbiblical notion. Such things do not exist. One cannot become a member of the church. One cannot be admitted to it or cast out of it. Nothing of the kind appears anywhere in Scripture. So it cannot be about that. It concerns the question of whom we associate with in everyday life.

That is indeed an important question, because the things that play a role in life—including other people, even brothers and sisters—have an influence on us. It is therefore wise to be selective. It may be necessary to choose to keep certain people out of one's life. That does not mean one cannot greet one another, nor does it mean one cannot sit together at the Lord's Supper. The idea that by doing so one would partake of another's sins requires a high degree of superstition—as though it were a contagious disease.

Paul's call is simply not to bind oneself to such people. But as to whether one may admit them to one's gathering—why not? The word of God is for all people, and

especially for sinners. Those who are coldest should sit closest to the fire. Those who need it most should not be sent away.

It is added that this concerns a brother; otherwise it would not say there is fornication among you. It is made quite explicit at the end of verse 5.

...that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

A person can be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus only if he is a believer. One may then say that someone who does such things cannot possibly be a believer, but that is perfectly possible. There are believers who do far stranger things than what is mentioned here. It has absolutely nothing to do with one another. It may be tragic that it has nothing to do with one another, but the question is not what ought or ought not to be, but what can or cannot be. There are therefore people who claim that such a person cannot possibly be a believer and on that ground exclude him from the Lord's Supper. Whether one is a believer or not is not determined by the amount or the gravity of one's sins. We do not know that; only the Lord knows.

In the first epistle of John the question is raised how we know whether someone is a believer. Behind that lies another question: why we need to know. After all, at the end we shall see who proves to be among them and who does not. But we need to know so that we know with whom we should associate and with whom not, and for whom we may bear some responsibility and for whom not. John says that a believer can be recognised with certainty by his love for the word and also by his love for fellow believers. That is called keeping His commandments and loving the brethren. If those things are absent, we do not know whether we are dealing with believers, and we are warned. Not with regard to managing the Lord's table—there is nothing to manage there—but with regard to our personal lives: what should be admitted into our sphere of life and what should not. That is obviously our personal choice. Paul says he chooses not to associate with such a person as described in verse 1. Of course one can preach the gospel to such people. One can even sit with them at the Lord's Supper. That is no problem at all. It becomes a little problematic when one knows such things about one another.

A well-known phenomenon is that when one associates with believers one does not really know at all, one feels real fellowship—often far more than in one's own local church. They proved to be believers too, and it was so pleasant together. How is it possible that, without really knowing one another, one can still have that spiritual bond? There is nothing remarkable about it. It is even obvious when one knows nothing about one another. It only becomes awkward when one knows who is sitting next to one and what is on his record. If one does not know those things from verse 1 about one another, it is fairly easy to experience a good bond. But when one does know them, it becomes rather more difficult. In any case, one should have no problem with it in a gathering of believers.

That is why Paul also says that our fellowship is not after the flesh. Our fellowship with one another is not determined by the fleshly aspects of us, but by our unity in Christ. In the practical everyday life—not in the assembly—those things do play a role. One talks with one another, listens to one another, takes things over from one another. That can be dangerous. And when one is confronted with someone like the one in verse 1, it is better to deliver him to Satan. That sounds harsher than it is, for the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, and we let that go too.

Someone who chooses not to serve the Lord but to lead another life—one that not only fails to accord with the life of a believer but is actually hostile to it—we have nothing further to do with. Even though we may be born again and one in Christ, those worlds are so far apart. That is called walking after the flesh. One should not associate with such people.

In fact, the underlying thought in this epistle is whether a sincere believer would associate at all with these Corinthians, who in general all maintain a fleshly worldview and way of life. Perhaps not exactly like this one man, but still in spiritual fornication: unfaithfulness to the Lord and in practice serving the world. Living according to worldly principles and all that goes with them. That lies behind it, of course. That is also why it is highly probable that Paul never visited Corinth again. He had nothing to do with those Corinthians. Well, they were brothers and he was concerned for them, but sometimes there is nothing to be done about it.

That applies to us too. In our gatherings there are plenty of people who have no love for the word of God, and with whom you therefore have nothing to do. What more is there to do? If they claim to be believers, so be it, but one sees no evidence of it. In practice there is nothing that binds you together. One has to make choices anyway, for one cannot associate with everyone.

In any case, the behaviour of the person in verse 1 is so unchristian that one does not want to be involved with it or associated with it. One distances oneself from it. Such a person one delivers to Satan, to the world.

We draw the weak in faith to ourselves, but those who do not want to stand in the faith at all are better left alone. Otherwise it is wasted energy, and moreover they have a harmful influence. It does not say that one cannot have such a person in one's church because the outside world will speak reproachfully of it, or because it is bad for one's reputation or witness. What will outsiders think of you if you have such a person in your midst? That would not interest us in the least. Those are all arguments sometimes used, but they are beside the point.

God gave the world over to work all uncleanness with greediness. The Lord does nothing against it but lets the world go (Romans 1). Here one finds it on another level, but it is in fact exactly the same

.So one delivers such a person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved. Paul has no doubt that it concerns a believer who will be saved in the day of Christ when He judges. His works will be burned, but he himself will be saved, yet so as by fire (1 Corinthians 3:15 Nevertheless he shall be saved; yet so as by fire.).The remarkable thing is that in this passage we do not even find a reproach directed at this man, but we do find one directed at the Corinthians—that they did not distance themselves from him. They were so proud that they thought it should all be possible, that they were strong enough for it.

1 Corinthians 5:6

Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

Leaven is a picture of sin. If taken narrowly, of fornication. In general terms, leaven in Scripture depicts everything that rises up against the word of God—that is, in general, false teaching. There is the leaven of:

- the Pharisees: loyalty to tradition;

- the Sadducees: the rationalists. They do not believe in miracles and demythologise everything. We call that liberalism—he feels free to give his own meaning to every word of Scripture;
- the Herodians: establishing power in the world through politics and negotiation. Everything one wants to achieve in this life must come through political means;
- the law: taking a place in the world on whatever level according to God's will.

First and foremost it is all false teaching in opposition to the teaching of the word of God.

Here it is used in a somewhat more general sense of sin, although of course it is still a kind of teaching that says it should all be possible. It really amounts to the teaching that God does not reckon with our old man and does not impute our sins to us. Moreover, we live by grace, so everything is permitted and everything is allowed. There is certainly a kernel of truth in that, but it is a misunderstanding. The misunderstanding is that one thinks grace can be used as an occasion to the flesh, as a cloak for an unrestrained life. That is not how it works, and in that form it is even false teaching. Freedom is not an excuse for keeping no rules at all; freedom is there so that one may serve the Lord. To that end one has been placed in freedom.

Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Paul is therefore speaking of contamination. And so it is. The lives of others influence us. The closer we stand to them, the more it will affect us. It shifts our own boundaries in our thinking. That is indeed contagious. If we are strong we should be immune to such things, but if we are immune to them we shall probably also stay away from them. Then one does not even want to have anything to do with them.

To leaven = to corrupt.

1 Corinthians 5:7

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

The old leaven refers to that man in verse 1. Apart from that, leaven stands for the world, a fleshly mind and a fleshly walk. That should be purged out. That is the thrust of the whole epistle and of the following one too. It seems this man is brought forward as a caricatured example of what the church in Corinth actually is: committing fornication, unfaithful to the Lord. Fornication is first and foremost unfaithfulness. The word is used more often in the sense of unfaithfulness to the Lord than in the fleshly sense.

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. Here there is an allusion to Passover. The ordinance of Passover depicts the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and thereby the dawning of a New Covenant in which God would remember sins no more. The ordinance of Passover is also called the ordinance of unleavened bread. Those terms are used interchangeably. The slaughtering and eating of the Passover lamb takes place after the houses have first been cleansed of leaven. That still happens in Judaism today, on the thirteenth of the first month. The fourteenth of the first month is the slaughtering and eating of the Passover lamb. Then the house is free of leaven. After that follow the seven days of the feast of Passover, also called the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread. The death and resurrection of Christ means that sins have been put away, and so it is accompanied by purging out the leaven.

The Lord's Supper was instituted on the night in which the Lord Jesus was betrayed. That takes place after the Passover meal. This means that the bread the Lord handed to His disciples, saying it was His body, was unleavened. In 1 Corinthians 10 it says that the bread is indeed a figure of the body of Christ, that is, of the church. We are to be partakers of one bread, but it is an unleavened bread.

So it says here too: that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. Leaven is sour dough and by definition old, spoiled, and therefore soured.

That ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.

If one is unleavened, how then must the leaven still be purged out? We are unleavened. That is our official position before God, who sees us perfect in Christ. The intention is that we also live from that and accordingly in our practical lives.

We have been saved—namely when we came to faith—but the intention is that we should yet be saved, but now on the level of our practical walk. In the third place, it is also the intention that our body should be saved at the redemption of the body. Those are three phases.

The same can be said of the concept of salvation. We are saved in spirit; we are being saved in soul; and we shall be saved in body. We have been delivered in spirit; we are being delivered in soul; and we shall be delivered in body. Therefore: we are unleavened in spirit; we should now, in our walk, purge out the leaven and ensure that we are unleavened; and we shall be delivered from this soured body.

We are unleavened, therefore purge out the old leaven.

We are holy, and the work of the Spirit is a work of sanctification. Because we are holy, the Lord performs a work of sanctification in us. That flows from it.

Paul writes this epistle to the sanctified in Christ Jesus. Well, in practice those Corinthians were not so holy, but officially they were, and that therefore had practical consequences.

1 Corinthians 5:8

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

If one does not know what leaven is, it is stated here: malice and wickedness. Sincerity and truth are the opposite of malice and wickedness. Malice and wickedness mean one is not sincere and occupies oneself with falsehood. That is unfaithfulness and thus fornication. The thrust of this passage is the following verse...

“Keep the feast” = *gamos*. This is the same word as for wedding. At a wedding one always misses the bride. There is a good reason for that, for it was not a wedding at all, but a meal. It may have been a wedding, but not necessarily. It is all an expression of union, of fellowship. Let us keep the feast = let us be one.

The one ritual meal we know—the Lord's Supper—is the expression of our fellowship with one another. Sitting at table has, since the beginning of Scripture, been the expression of fellowship, of union. The table is the expression of a culture. Sitting at the same table is therefore union with the same culture, with that way of life.

Let their table become a snare and a trap. That concerns Jewish culture. Their table is full and the Lord can add nothing to it. There is only refuse on it and no room for what the Lord would give them. Their culture is closed and there is no place for the Lord to make anything new of it. The table must first be overturned because something else is to come upon it.

To overturn = to cleanse.

It is not for nothing that the Lord on occasion also literally overturned the tables. We are invited to His table to have fellowship with Him.

So let us keep the feast, let us hold the meal. Not with old leaven.

When one hears sincerity and truth, one naturally thinks of certainty. Sincerity has to do with righteousness; it is straight and does not deviate. One can rely on it. Truth is by definition also straight. Everything that deviates from truth is a lie. If one has sincerity and truth, one immediately has certainty too. This means that uncertainty and doubt are caused by insincerity and untruthfulness and thus also openness to the lie. The Bible gives us certainty because it is the word of God. It is the Truth. It is also without ulterior motives. The point is to know Him and the power of His resurrection. The Lord enables us to do so through this word of truth and through this epistle. 1 Corinthians 5:9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:

“Company with” = associate with, in the sense of friendly association. It appears again in verse 11.

2 Thessalonians 3:14

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

2 Thessalonians 3:15

Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Even though he is a brother, one need not associate with him in a friendly way. 2

Corinthians 6:14

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

2 Corinthians 6:17

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

This concerns unbelievers, but in practice the difference between the natural man who is an unbeliever and the believer oriented toward the flesh is scarcely discernible. That life looks the same. The spiritual life is suppressed in it and there is therefore no basis for fellowship. We should therefore keep far from it. We should take care of our own life and indeed shield it. That applies equally to the natural man. We have received life and are responsible for it. Even for unbelievers it is wise to set boundaries and make choices: this yes, that no. Even if everything is permitted, that does not mean everything is obligatory. It is allowed, therefore it must be done. And so we end up where we do not want to be at all. We choose what we eat, how we dress, where we live, what we join ourselves to. We set boundaries in life. Certain things we do not do, do not want to do. That is how we do it as natural people. For us as believers it is exactly the same. In that we should realise that certain things, though not forbidden, are nevertheless harmful. They can take hold of us and distract us.

It is not a responsibility of the church as a collective, but of each individual believer. It concerns the choices one makes in one's own life. This expresses itself first and foremost in whom we associate with and whom we do not, for our own benefit. Just as we decide what we will eat and what we will not eat for the sake of our physical health, so we also decide what we will read and what we will not read for the sake of our spiritual health. After that we also decide which films we will watch and which we will

not. Well, many of us probably think we are immune and that it makes no difference. But anyway...Believers who maintain a certain way of life do not, in practice, form part of our fellowship. In practice!2 Corinthians 5:16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh:

It means exactly what it says.

“Know” here means to practise or exercise fellowship.

Our union, our fellowship, is not determined by earthly or fleshly circumstances. There may be such things that bind us to one another, but they have nothing to do with our faith. We are one in Christ, and our fellowship is not after the flesh but after the spirit, because we are new creatures in Christ and for that reason have become alienated from this old world.

It should be clear that we have little to do with a way of life that is not so much as named among the Gentiles. In practice we do not—for that is what it concerns.

Verse 3 continues directly into verse 5. Verse 4 is a long parenthesis in which Paul says that, figuratively speaking, he is assembled together with the Corinthians. The intention is that all believers should react in the same way. He says: “I have judged already, as though I were present, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh.” And he says that the Corinthians are also expected to do this. One does not associate with such a person. This is repeated several times afterwards.

This is not an official act in connection with church discipline. For there are no official acts at all. Church discipline does not exist—at least not in the Bible. Believers are expected to walk under the leading of the Spirit. We are not under the law. So much for your discipline. As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God. They are led by the Spirit to sonship and inheritance—which, incidentally, is spoken of in the second part of this chapter. The church collectively has but one Head. All the rest can be left out. None of that other matter is in view. It cannot be about that.

Paul has decided to deliver the man in verse 1 to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. That will come to an end one day. When the man dies, that is the end of the story. An immoral way of life comes to its own conclusion sooner or later. Perhaps later than we might have hoped, but that is how it is.

He adds: “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus,” which at any rate means that we are dealing here with a believer. It is better not to know what believers get up to. Then one has no problem with it. But this case is a well-known one, and so one is expected to take a stand.

Paul addresses no words to the man himself, but to the Corinthians; he rebukes them sharply and says: “Your glorying is not good.” What exactly they were glorying in is not entirely clear. Perhaps they said something like: “Well, we all live by grace; so come on, it must all be allowed. We stand in liberty.” Paul says that is not so. Of course it is so—all things are lawful unto me—but “I will not be brought under the power of any.” The last part he could not have said of the Corinthians. That is Paul’s way of addressing them: he speaks of himself but sets it before the Corinthians as an example.

Liberty exists only when it is accompanied by responsibility. If one does not wish to bear responsibility, it is no longer called liberty but licence. That is explained in all the epistles. We stand in grace and live in liberty; we stand in liberty and therefore bear responsibility. The responsibility is that we make use of that liberty not to fulfil the will of men but the will of God.

But do we not associate with one another as believers in that way? Well, in the Bible it does happen. There Paul even rebukes Peter publicly and writes of it in a letter to us as well. In Timothy certain people are named by name. Of Hymenaeus and Philetus Paul writes that their word will eat as doth a canker. That is an even coarser way of describing what leaven does. They are named by name, as a warning.

Purge out therefore the old leaven. That is our responsibility.

Fornicators in Scripture do not refer primarily to physical fornication but far more to spiritual fornication. In the Bible spiritual things are always more important and far-reaching than material things. When Scripture speaks of fornicators, it usually concerns people who are unfaithful to the Lord. So if one is not to company with fornicators, one should think first of spiritual fornicators—of people who depart from the word of God. As for immorality, this is certainly connected with spiritual fornication, for the will of God is our sanctification, and this is almost the opposite. When 1 Thessalonians 4:3 says, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification,” it immediately adds, “that ye should abstain from fornication.” Fornication is evidently no sanctification at all. If one gives in to the one, one withdraws from the other. That is a fixed principle. Therefore, that ye company not with fornicators. 1 Corinthians 5:10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

Implying that that is not the intention either. 1 Corinthians 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

Once again, “keep company” means friendly association.

“That is called a brother” can mean that he is one, but it can also mean that he is so named without necessarily being one.

“So-called” means someone or something is designated as such, yet it leaves open whether he or it really is what the name suggests. Whether it is justified remains in question.

With such a one you are not to keep the feast either. It is the same as “let us keep the feast” in verse 8. It concerns fellowship. With such a one one does not company.

Ye shall not company with such a one;

with such a one ye shall not eat.

In Galatians 2 Paul rebukes Peter publicly.

Galatians 2:12

For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

One could of course say that this concerns literal eating, and perhaps it does. Jewish religion is in any case much concerned with eating, for food must be kosher. Peter ate with the Gentiles. By Jewish standards that was not kosher, but when people came from Jerusalem who in fact practised the Jewish law, Peter adapted himself to them. Of course it is more than eating alone. A Jew does not eat with a Gentile; he does not even set foot over the threshold.

Luke 15:2

And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

The Lord Jesus associated in a friendly way with publicans and sinners.

In Acts 10 Peter is in the house of Cornelius the Gentile.

Acts 10:40 - 41

Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;

Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

They will undoubtedly have eaten and drunk together, but that is naturally not the primary meaning. The point is that they did indeed associate with one another for forty days after the resurrection, so that they could confirm with power that the Lord Jesus had risen. They ate together, but they also exchanged thoughts.

Acts 11:1 -3

And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

You went into their house and spoke and ate with them.

Eating together is living together, whether occasionally or continually.

Back to 1 Corinthians 5. 1 Corinthians 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

1 Corinthians 5:12

For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

1 Corinthians 5:13

But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

Paul speaks here alternately about our possible relationship with unbelievers and with believers who live as unbelievers. The world is the world. Very well, so be it. Those people are, so to speak, marked. But when it concerns those who are called brothers, then one is warned, for it is very much a question how far one is practically bound to such a person.

If an unbeliever says he believes in the theory of evolution, then you know he is an unbeliever and that he has nothing else. It is logical that he believes in evolution. But if you meet a believer who says he believes in the theory of evolution, then you do have a problem. Where does such a person get that from? It comes from the world and is introduced into the fellowship of believers. The Bible gives not the slightest occasion for anything like the theory of evolution. On the contrary, the Bible teaches the opposite: that everything in this world degenerates and goes backwards. In so far as there is any building up, it is at most in the existence of the individual and even then only in the very earliest part of his existence. There is a baby, and it grows up. Many things develop. Ultimately the sexual organs develop. Then it more or less stops, for immediately afterwards decline sets in. He can just about reproduce. He is in a hurry about that, for afterwards it goes downhill. In the Bible everything is on its way to death. In nature too. Within two or three weeks the leaves are suddenly back on the tree, but then they

gradually fall off again. In any case, there is not the slightest biblical ground for a doctrine of evolution.

So one must beware of what is within. All sorts of things creep in—including false brethren privily brought in (Galatians 2:4), who come to spy out our liberty. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things (Acts 20:29). Normally they come from outside, but they also come from within. We are warned of that.

Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person. Not excommunication, but in the sense that one does not associate with such people.

1 Corinthians 6:1

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

A “matter” in legal language—a lawsuit.

Dare any of you go to law? Dare any of you seek justice? The idea is that there are disputes among believers which are brought before a court of law to obtain a verdict.

But why do believers do that? That is what the world does.

In the world there is no justice. Justice rests on the finding of truth, and truth does not exist in the world. Judgment belongs to God, who also said: “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Romans 12, quoting the Old Testament).

1 Corinthians 6:2

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

If there is some injustice, surely you can settle it among yourselves!

Verse 7 says: “Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” Why not rather suffer wrong? Then you are rid of the problem. Just suffer wrong. What does it matter? We as children of God have nothing to lose. In so far as justice must be done for whatever reason, do not worry—God will do it. God is by definition first and foremost a just God. So it will be all right. You may need to have rather a long breath, but you need not sit waiting for it either.

The believers in Corinth, however fleshly they may be, are nevertheless regarded as saints. Those saints (together the church) shall judge the world. That is the consequence of our being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ and called to sonship on the ground of the right of the firstborn (Romans 8). The church is the body of Christ and in that capacity involved in the work of Christ. He is the Firstborn among many brethren. In short, when in the future justice is done by a righteous God, that justice will be administered by Christ and His church.

“World” = kosmos = the whole creation, unless otherwise stated, and here it is not otherwise stated.

1 Corinthians 6:3

Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

If you think the judgment is brought by angels simply because the Lord comes with His angels, then the church takes a position above the angels. Even the angels belonging to the kosmos will be judged by the church. We ourselves shall be judged by the Lord Jesus

Christ at the rapture of the church and our manifestation before the judgment seat of Christ.

We are therefore to judge the world, but if you now let the world judge over us—or over some of us—then you are out of order. Even out of legal order. It is the world turned upside down.

Surely we can settle those small lawsuits ourselves? If only by withdrawing the charge, for instance. Then the matter is settled and the case is dropped.

Verses 2 and 3 form a parallelism:

The saints shall judge the world;
the saints shall judge angels.

Are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

How much more things that pertain to this life?

The smallest matters are the things that pertain to this life—the old life. They are also the smallest, for more serious are the things that pertain to the new life. That is to say, spiritual things stand above material things. Let us therefore set our minds on spiritual things, and we can let the earthly go.

We naturally think at once that this is easier said than done. Nevertheless, that is what the Bible teaches about it. One must get used to it and learn to understand that that is how it works.

1 Corinthians 6:4

If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

That concerns this whole old life. If you have problems with other brothers or sisters, then call in one or more brothers and ask them to give judgment.

“Least esteemed” = literally not counted, not reckoned. One can still interpret it as: someone not involved. Someone who plays no significant role in the matter at hand. That seems logical, for that is how it should always be in a lawsuit: appoint someone over it who is not involved.

Ephesians 2:

I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?

Whether this is serious advice from Paul one is not entirely sure. If it is serious advice, it seems very difficult to carry out. If you are at odds with one another and judgment is given by someone least esteemed in the church, one does not expect both parties to accept the verdict—for what weight do you attach to someone least esteemed? How serious then is such a recommendation? That is why Paul says it to your shame.

Is there then no wise person to be found in the church, so that one must resort to someone outside the church? Are there wise men there? According to chapter 1, no.

1 Corinthians 6:6

But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Nevertheless one brother goes to law with another brother, and that before an unbeliever = an unrighteous one. Unbelievers, who seek to establish their own righteousness and are not subject to the righteousness of God (Romans 10:3).

1 Corinthians 6:7

Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another.
Is it so bad with you? Do you lack so much that you have lawsuits among yourselves?

1 Corinthians 6:8

Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.
Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? We have nothing to lose. The Lord cares for us. We should commit ourselves to Him. We are bought with a price; therefore let us glorify God in our body. If we were to claim the rights of this old creation, we should all deserve the death penalty. It is therefore not very wise to appeal to the rights of the world. By that standard we are, according to biblical measures, unrighteous and transgressors. Those standards concern this old creation. We are guilty of death. But now we live from the grace of God. To claim rights from that standpoint is in itself unrighteousness. By seeking justice one does wrong and defrauds.
In our old life we are of course also involved in the affairs of this world. There it is sometimes unavoidable that one ends up in lawsuits—even if only for a traffic offence. That cannot always be avoided, but that is in the world. It may well be that we come into conflict with someone who is also a believer because of earthly circumstances. That cannot always be avoided. Yet the first rule remains—even under those circumstances—that it is better to suffer wrong.
Seeking one's rights sounds very idealistic and very principled, but it is extremely unwise. It may be that in your own eyes you stand in the right, but it is very much open to question whether that is really so—and to spend all one's money on it? That does not seem very sensible. There is a good chance that the more one lives under the law, the more one tends to seek one's rights. People who live under the law seek their rights on the basis of that law, yet they may very well know that by God's standard they have not a leg to stand on. Just as truth does not exist in the world, so neither does justice. To pursue it is therefore rather futile.
Moreover, as believers we are expected to be humble and to have submitted ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. We live from the fact that He cares for us and gives us what we need. In so far as justice must be done, we learn from the Bible that the Lord postpones doing justice in this world for a while yet, but it will one day be put right. Justice will be done. God will judge; we shall judge over all people who have ever lived. When one reads in Revelation 20 of the dead standing before God before the great white throne, one must bear in mind that we are also sitting there. God judges, but we shall be involved in it. On the last day justice will finally be done. In Ecclesiastes one may do what one likes, but it is all vanity—yet at the end of the day justice will be done anyway. In Daniel 7 one reads of the Ancient of days and the Son of man. He was there with ten thousand times ten thousand, and the thrones of judgment were set. It was not just one great white throne, but it can also be subdivided into ten thousand times ten thousand thrones, for the court sits there. The sitting of the court is still a ritual even in our day. Everyone stand; the judge and his attendants enter; they sit down; then the others may sit. It is an official matter. So it is in Revelation 20 too. The ten thousand times ten thousand refers to the church. If one keeps that in mind, one also knows that one can suffer wrong here.
We are His servants, and He cares for His staff.

Even the Lord Jesus Himself suffers wrong in the world right up to our own day. Our striving after justice in the world is absurd, premature, and unrighteous. We are not above our Lord. As long as He is hated in the world and suffers wrong, we too shall be hated in the world and suffer wrong—at whatever level.

Verse 8 says that if you have a lawsuit, you are doing wrong by it. “Wrong” is another word for injustice, as already appeared from the previous sentence. 1 Corinthians 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?

Very well, then there are unrighteous ones in our midst—perhaps even among the brethren—but justice will be done. That means there will be loss to their inheritance. The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If those unrighteous ones are believers, they will enter the kingdom, but they will not inherit. They will not receive full reward.

1 Corinthians 6:10

Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

God will indeed do justice. If one does not know how to conduct oneself in this life, how shall one inherit with Him? What we have not learned here we cannot practise there. It is a solemn warning. 1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

“Sanctified” = placed in the service of God.

“Justified” = declared righteous, acquitted.

Our right is with the Lord.

In so far as there are those among us who misbehave, God will do justice.

The thought of inheriting the kingdom of God is also found in Galatians 5 and Ephesians 5. In Galatians 5 the Spirit and the flesh are explicitly set in opposition to one another.

We are to walk in the Spirit and so not fulfil the lust of the flesh, for these two are contrary the one to the other.

Galatians 5:18

But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Claiming the law is therefore also ruled out.

Galatians 5:19

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Galatians 5:20

Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

Galatians 5:21

Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

He does not say that such people will not enter the kingdom of God. Perhaps not—but that would also require them to be unbelievers. A person is not justified because he does not do these things. A person is justified on the ground of faith, without works—whatever those works may be. But whether he inherits, and to what degree he inherits;

whether he receives reward, and to what degree he receives reward—that does indeed depend on works.

Whether we walk in works devised by the evil one or in works which God has prepared beforehand makes a real difference.

So the question here is not who will be saved, but who will inherit. All believers are called to it, but whether all believers will actually partake of it remains to be seen. We should reach forth to it, run our race—forgetting those things which are behind and pressing toward those things which are before.

Suffered wrong? It does not matter. What is done cannot be undone. Let it go. In contrast to the works of the flesh, in contrast to the fruit of the flesh, stands the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

One will be rewarded for that—partly because that fruit of the Spirit expresses itself in the practical walk of the believer.

We should be followers of God and therefore

Ephesians 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

Ephesians 5:4

Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

Foolish talking and jesting. Some think this has to do with telling jokes, but probably the foolish talking and jesting that the Evangelical Broadcasting Company pours out over us nowadays comes much closer. That nagging about Darwin versus Calvin and so on—that is foolish talking and jesting. Such things are not convenient. What is convenient is rather giving of thanks.

Ephesians 5:5

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

It concerns departing from the word of God. That is foolish talking and vain speaking or vain crying. Such a person may well be born again or have been born again, but whether he grows up to sonship and is placed as a son remains to be seen. And that is just as well, for it means that we as children of God still have something in this life to strive for—to endeavour to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, or to press toward the prize of the high calling of God which is in Christ Jesus. When one bears in mind who we have become, to what we are called, and whither we are bound, it ought to be possible to put the things of this life in perspective. Let it pass. It is a waste of time to fret over any wrong one may suffer. It takes possession of one and keeps one from the things that really matter.

We are washed; we are sanctified—for cleansing and sanctification both have the same result: they have placed us in the service of God. Cleansing is cleansing unto sanctification. We have been cleansed from these earthly things so that we might serve the living God. We do that in the liberty in which we have been placed. That is the responsibility we bear. All things are lawful unto me, but not all things are expedient—in the sense of profitable. The point is not so much that all things are lawful—let alone that all things must be done—but that we use our liberty to serve Him by whom we have been washed, that we might serve Him. We are bought with a price and are the Lord's. Therefore we should glorify God in our body.

Warning against fornication

1 Corinthians 6:12

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

All things are permitted. This does not mean that all things must be done.

All things are lawful unto us, but we should present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God (Romans 12:1). We should not offer the tithes, but our whole being and possession to the Lord. That is what the Lord requires of us. Yet He does not command it. He does expect that we shall do it, because it is righteous.

In Romans 6 it says that we should yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. We should no longer serve sin, but righteousness. We should no longer live unto sin, but unto God. This is summed up in our presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. There is good reason for it. The Lord Jesus, after He had by Himself purged our sins, was highly exalted and set as High Priest. Since His resurrection He must therefore do as every high priest did—namely, offer a sacrifice. And that He has done: He offered Himself. Well, He offered His body and thereby fulfilled the will of God, by the which will we are sanctified (Hebrews 10:5–10). This means that when the Lord rose from the dead, He presented Himself—including His body—in the service of God, whereupon God immediately appointed Him High Priest. Since we are members of His body, we too are placed in that priestly function. That is no premature conclusion from Hebrews 10, but it is stated in many places in the New Testament epistles—namely, that we as firstborn of a new creation are called to priesthood. We form part of a royal priesthood. We have been made kings and priests unto God and His Father by the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:6) and are built as living stones upon that one Stone into a temple of God (and thus a priestly people). We are His body and are therefore expected—also individually—to serve God.

We are born priests, just as the sons of Aaron were born priests. It is expected of us that we place ourselves at God's disposal for that service, under the leading of the High Priest. He is, after all, the Head of the service.

In short, we do not live under the law; there are no things forbidden to us. All things are lawful unto us, but not all things are expedient; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify (1 Corinthians 10:23).

If for tactical reasons one decides not to say such a thing to others, one certainly should not say it to the Corinthians. They would only abuse it. Yet it is precisely to them that the apostle says it.

The point is not merely whether we live in sin or not, but whether we serve God or not.

Sinning is negative = nothing = zero. But it is not about negative or zero; it is about positive or zero. If you do not wish to serve the Lord, then it makes no difference to the Lord how you live—for what difference will it make to Him? For us among ourselves, for family and society, it does make a difference, but Paul has no message about that.

All things are lawful unto me, but we should use that liberty to serve God. That the devil would rather not have it, and in practice the world does not either, we know well enough—but we do it anyway, because it is the normal consequence of our new birth, and all the more now that by new birth we have become firstfruits of a new creation and thereby members of the body of Christ. Firstborn, called to sonship, called to kingship

and priesthood. Our hearts have been purged from an evil conscience to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14). We have turned from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

All things are lawful unto me, but this does not mean that all things are expedient.

“Expedient” = sympherō

sym = with, together;

pherō = to bear, carry.

If something is expedient, it contributes; if something is not expedient, it makes no contribution.

“Edify” is old English for build up. In that sense one finds it in notarial deeds, where buildings are not “built” but “founded” or “established.” An edifying sermon is a building-up sermon.

All things are indeed permitted, but whether something contributes and whether it is edifying is the question. Because we do not live under the law, that question is not answered for us. We stand in liberty and must therefore answer the question ourselves. In the church they have invented statutes, canon law, and church discipline so that one immediately loses one’s liberty again. Thus one sees that religion and law are completely identical.

The truth makes free.

All things are lawful unto me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. All things are therefore not obligatory. A great many things that are indeed permitted contribute in no way whatever to the work of the Lord. Those things might well contribute to society, but that is completely beside the point. That is a matter of the world. How far one is involved in it one must see for oneself. When Paul speaks of mutual relations, he almost exclusively means relations within the church. On rare occasions he speaks of those who are without. Of them he says that one must on no account be dependent upon them.

Profitable things are things that contribute to the work and building up of the body of Christ. God has given to the church some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11–12). The rest of that chapter is about that.

Each part should grow up into its measure, within its dimensions. We as believers, as members of the body of Christ, have therein a specific, limited, moderate function. Know therefore what you are doing. The intention was that our lives should be to the glory of God. That should be our standard. Those are the norms and values of the believer. They are connected with the building up of the body of Christ. We ourselves are expected to find out what contributes to the building up of the body of Christ. For that purpose we are instructed in the work of God in our days. We are instructed in what God has done in the past, in what He will do in the future, and we are instructed in what God is doing in this time—not in the 21st century, but in what He is doing from the resurrection of Christ until the revelation of Christ.

Before the Lord comes to raise up again the tabernacle of David that is fallen down and to fulfil all that the prophets have spoken, God first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name (Acts 15:14–17). There is no more work of the Lord in our days than that. You may find that little enough, but it is also said that the Lord has

limited Himself to that work. He has given Himself over to it. That is the same word as for “taken captive.”

Not the Gentiles in general, but a people out of the Gentiles. Not an open glory, but for the present a hidden glory. As we come to understand that, we are changed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2). That is the background of this passage of Scripture. It is not set forth here too dogmatically, but that would probably have been wasted effort for the Corinthians.

We may do as we please, but of course there is a reason why God has redeemed us. It is so that we might serve Him. He paid a costly price for that.

1 Corinthians 6:13

Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

God will destroy both food and the stomach. For these are things that belong to the old creation, and we are expected to be new creatures in Christ. The one is for the other, and the other is for the one. It is not merely that you can use the stomach for food—no, it is for that purpose. You can also use the body for fornication, but that is not what it is for. The body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

There are people who claim that the body is dead to God. After all, One died for all, therefore all died. We have not yet received a new body, and so the body is dead to God. What you do with it therefore makes no difference to God. It is cleverly thought out, and of course a convenient way to avoid taking any notice of anything or bearing any responsibility—under the motto that everything will turn out as God intended anyway. It will be clear that the next step in this line of reasoning is universal reconciliation.

The Bible teaches in many places that the body is alive to God. That is why Romans 12:1 says that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. A living sacrifice—because our body is most certainly alive to God. If the doctrine of the Trinity had not reasoned the Holy Spirit out of the way, people might have realised that the Holy Spirit is simply life—holy, divine life. We receive that Spirit when we are born again. These are not two things, but one. Just as Christ and the Holy Spirit are not two things. The Spirit is Christ. The Spirit is life, and Christ is our life. When that life of Christ—the Spirit of Christ—dwells in us, what do you suppose the consequences are for the body and for our relationship to God? If that Spirit is life, and we receive that Spirit, then we have been made alive to God. That is precisely what new birth is.

Romans 8:8

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Whether you try hard or not makes no difference; it is in the flesh, and the law is laid upon the flesh. In that condition one cannot please God. People perhaps, but not God.

Romans 8:9

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

If it is true that the Spirit of God dwells in you, then you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. The Spirit of God is therefore the same as the Spirit of Christ. He is, after all, God. There is nothing difficult about that.

“He is none of his” = he is not His property.

We who have received that Spirit therefore belong to Him and are His property. We are His reward, His inheritance, His possession, His pearl.

Romans 8:10

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

The body is dead to sin—to the sinful nature that rules over the old man. But the body is dead to sin so that there is nothing left for sin to rule over. But the Spirit is life so that righteousness may rule over us and we may serve righteousness. The same thought appears again afterwards.

Romans 8:11

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

If that Spirit dwells in us, then it will also be the case that He who raised Christ from the dead will quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in us. If the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead dwells in us, then we too have obviously been quickened by that same Spirit—even though we were not physically dead. We are still in a mortal body. That mortal body has been made alive to God because His life dwells in it. What consequences does that have? That is what it comes down to. If you do not wish to accept them, then you are trying to split hairs. Why does the entire so-called scientific world cling to the theory of evolution, even though happily there are still many who consider it nonsense? Because they have no alternative. The only alternative is that there is Someone somewhere who put the whole thing together—who created it. It is one or the other. That is why the theory of evolution is defended so fiercely—because otherwise one would have to accept a God to whom one is by definition subject, upon whom one is by definition dependent, and whom one would by definition obey. If one does not want that, then one must invent something else.

If our bodies have been made alive, then the consequence is...

Romans 8:12

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

For they that are after the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:13

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

If you live after the flesh, death works in your mortal body. A mortal body is not merely a body that can die, but a body that is in the process of dying. “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (literally, “dying thou shalt die”). The translators have made it “thou shalt surely die,” but that misses the real meaning. Man did indeed become a living soul, but for the greater part of his existence he is a mortal soul.

If you live after the flesh, the result is that you live under the dominion of death. If through the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live—not only in the future, but obviously in the present. The same thought appears in Romans 6 as well.

Romans 6:8

Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

Logically so. Not in the future, but in the present. For we have been planted together with Him in the likeness of His death and therefore also in the likeness of His

resurrection—and thereby also in His ascension, though that comes later in Ephesians 2. When we were born again, that divine life was planted in us. Therefore the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord. It has been made alive by Him; it is therefore for Him.

1 Corinthians 6:14

And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. Not in the future, but in the present. He gives us that life, and the intention is that that life should come to development.

1 Corinthians 6:15

Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

Not “shall be” after the bodily resurrection, but now—because the life of Christ is in them. The biblical teaching that the church is the body of Christ rests on the fact that the life of Christ is in each one of us. Because the life of Christ is in us, we collectively form one body on the basis of that one Life. That is also what is pictured in what we call the Lord’s Supper, which is taken up in chapters 10 and 11. We all drink of the same cup. It is the communion of the blood (the life) of Christ. If one does not want that, then one makes it into a mere commemoration of the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus. That brings us right back to the beginning. One need not forget it, of course, but we have received signs that are meant to remind us precisely that He did not only die in the past, but that He lives and lays claim to our lives and our bodies. We are members of Him and sit at His table. We live by what He hands us from the riches of His grace. Therefore we should also serve Him. Whose bread one eats, his word one speaks.

Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? The bodies of all believers—no matter how fleshly they may live. However fleshly they may be, that changes nothing. They have been bought with a price and are therefore the Lord’s property. Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? A rhetorical question to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 6:16

What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

1 Corinthians 6:17

But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

On the basis of God’s statement in Genesis 2:24—that the two shall be one flesh. The intention is that we should be one spirit with the Lord.

The two shall be one flesh—we still ask ourselves to this day: how so? In what way? Because we do not know the answer, we usually pay no attention to it. People say it is figurative, and perhaps it is. Since the 1960s we have been sexually liberated, but the idea persists that in physical union between man and woman some kind of bond is formed—and it is not about conception. It is at least an emotional bond, but in practice more than that. The biblical view—and the general view in the world in former times—was that through physical union there is indeed a growing together. That man and woman come to resemble one another and that an emotional bond arises. More than that: that love on the level of feelings is generated by physical union. Union does not

only produce offspring but also binds man and woman together. At the very least that is what the expression in Genesis 2:24 means.

All things are lawful unto me. In Acts 15 the question was whether believers should live under the law. The answer is that they are not expected to live under the law. Yet there is still something that looks like law.

Acts 15:19

Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

Acts 15:20

But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

When animals are slaughtered, the blood is immediately removed. “Things strangled” you get when you catch a rabbit in a snare. If you come to the animal one or two days later, it has of course long been dead, and you cannot get the blood out any more. That is what is strangled. Things strangled and blood are therefore related. One should therefore not eat things strangled either, because they still contain blood.

Now the question is why one should not eat such things. If all things are lawful, why these restrictions? As far as is known, more is transmitted through blood than merely blood—namely things that escape detection in a laboratory. The curious thing is that at the very moment God gave man permission to eat meat, He added that one must not eat blood. In all probability eating meat makes man less receptive to spiritual influences. It makes him less suitable as a medium. All those people who seek spiritual things begin by eating vegetarian. So the Bible says one may eat meat because it makes one less receptive to demons, but eating blood transmits spiritual things. There is something to it. It is a well-known but suppressed fact that organ transplants can also transfer something demonic. Scientists do not believe in things one cannot see and therefore not in their transmission either. Nevertheless there are quite a number of well-documented cases showing that more than just the organ was transferred. Personality can change, as can memory. People remember things they never experienced, but which turn out to be memories of the person from whom the organ came. It does not happen often, but of course they do not tell you about it.

There are sexually transmitted diseases, but as far as is known more can be transmitted than merely the disease. For there is communion—that is what Scripture calls it. What kind of communion? Well, fluids from one person enter the other. But what of it? Because more is transferred than merely bacteria and seed. That is why it says the two shall be one flesh. That is why one must be careful with whom one does it. It has an influence on one and is therefore risky. It is more than just playing a game; it impinges on one’s life, one’s body, and one’s spiritual household.

Through union with a harlot one may make oneself a member of a harlot. It is not a casual matter.

The next question then is how it is in marriage. That is even more delicate. That is why it says: “He that marrieth doeth well; but he that marrieth not doeth better.” These are things that have consequences for our own life. It is not merely optional. That is why sexuality has from ancient times been a fenced-off area. 1 Corinthians 6:16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

We have received the Spirit of the Lord. Thereby we are joined to Him and have part in His life. In Ephesians 5 it says: “Be filled with the Spirit.” Or: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16). Or: “That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Ephesians 3:19). If those expressions describe how we as believers are conformed to the image of God’s Son—not outwardly but inwardly.

If verse 17 stands in contrast to verse 16, then it means that in physical union there is evidently a becoming one.

The intention is that we should cleave to the Lord. Notice that “cleave” (or “be joined”) is the same word used in verse 16.

Not cleave to the harlot and become one flesh with her;

but cleave to the Lord and become one spirit with Him.

The latter is not something physical, but it is most certainly a becoming one.

There is communication and transfer of “personality” and therefore...

1 Corinthians 6:18

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

Fornication is not without the body but within the body. There is transfer of bodily fluids and it affects the body. Not merely from one to the other, but also from the other to the one. That communion we should have with the Lord.

1 Corinthians 6:19

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

“Your” (plural).

“Body” (singular).

That was plural in verse 15. Up to verse 18 the passage concerned the bodies of individual believers.

Here the word “your” (plural) lays emphasis on the fact that “body” stands in the singular. For we believers also form one body collectively. The passage is therefore speaking of the body—that is, the church. Our individual bodies are expected to form part of it. The body of Christ is not merely an intangible matter. It expresses itself in our individual bodies. Conversely, our individual bodies—made alive, in each of which one and the same Spirit dwells—together form one body, namely the body of Christ. We are members of that one body.

Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost? It is but one temple. We are living stones of that one temple. The Spirit of God is in that temple.

We are not our own. We stand in liberty and all things are lawful unto us, but we are not our own. We are the property of Christ. Therefore Christ should be glorified in our bodies.

He offered His body once for all. We therefore have been offered. That did not happen on our own account. We had neither part nor lot in it. He offered us, and it is made known to us so that we should draw the consequences from it. We should therefore not simply give our bodies away to another. We belong to Him, for His life is in us. That goes rather further than our having converted to Christianity.

We did not do that; we have turned to Christ. We have received His Spirit. We have not become members of a denomination, but of the body of Christ. Even our bodies have

become members of the body of Christ. From this we must conclude that our children too—at least while they are children—are expected to form part of the body of Christ, even though they are not born again.

Children are children because they bear no responsibility, and so in Scripture they are identified with their parents. Since they are identified with them, and the parents form part of the church, the children therefore also form part of it. That is why Paul addresses children directly: “Children, obey your parents.” They stand under their parents, they are reckoned with their parents, and because they belong to the church, Paul can address them directly within the framework of such an epistle. If the children listen well to their parents, they too will come to faith. That reaches far.¹ Corinthians 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

For we are bought with a price.¹ Peter 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1 Peter 1:14

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

That is why people prefer to remain ignorant; then they need not feel addressed by this verse. Knowledge is indeed power, but knowledge also brings responsibility and suffering.

1 Peter 1:15

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

1 Peter 1:16

Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Everything that is holy is holy because it is set apart for the service of God. That is why we believers are called saints. That is why we should also walk holily.

1 Peter 1:18

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

1 Peter 1:19

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

“Redeemed” = ransomed. A ransom price has been paid.

“Vain conversation” = futile manner of life.

That is precisely what we have been redeemed from. That futile manner of life is in particular tradition. That tradition exists only because it is tradition. It is simply there, and one must hold to it. When people are brought the gospel, they say: “But that is not how I was brought up.” That is tradition. Leave everything as it is. Empty. They do not know why they do something, except that it has always been done that way.

1 Peter 1:19

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

The precious blood of Christ flows, so to speak, through our veins. We have been ransomed because a blood transfusion has taken place. We have received different

blood. That is why we are free. We have received different life—the life of the One who brought about freedom. He came into this world under the law to redeem those who were under the law and to overcome him who had the power of death. We have received His blood. Therefore we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. It should be clear that this is not about the literal blood from the cross of Golgotha. Not that that blood is unclean, but that is not the point. People make it so, with the result that they lose the present situation of the believer—including the present work of Christ. The point is that the blood of Christ is in us: “This is the blood of the new testament.” The blood of the old testament was the blood at the cross. The blood of the new testament is the eternal life we have received. It is His life. Therefore we are members of His body and thereby His property. Thereby we are also redeemed from the old so that we might serve Him under the new. Some stretch that redemption so far that they are also redeemed under the new covenant—namely from the new covenant. Then people theorise about for whom the new covenant is intended. They show that it is for Israel and draw the wrong conclusion that therefore it is not for us. And if Christ is the High Priest of the new covenant and we do not live under the new covenant, then Christ is not our High Priest either. Then He is not our Head of service, and we are not priests. If He offered His body and it was not the church, then we too have not been offered to God—and so one gets rid of all these things.

The blood by which we have been redeemed—has anyone ever seen it again? Yet it is precisely that blood of the Lamb, described here, that is in us. It is the blood of a lamb without blemish and without spot. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross of Golgotha as the Lamb of God, He was not without blemish and not without spot. It is surely to be hoped that He bore my punishment. We may safely assume that, for Scripture says that the chastisement of our peace was upon Him (Isaiah 53:5). If He bore our punishment, then He was indeed punishable and also defiled, for He bore our sins and was thereby defiled.

John saw the Lamb standing as it had been slain. The Lamb had been slain, but it was standing again—and on the throne. It may look rather strange if you draw it, but of course that is not the point. Christ is still that Lamb, but He is the Risen One and is therefore now without blemish and without spot. The Lamb here in 1 Peter 1 therefore does not refer to the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus, but to Christ in His resurrection. It concerns His blood, His life.

By His blood we have been ransomed.

Back to 1 Corinthians 6.

This is the introduction to a subject that for us human beings is far weightier, and therefore these things must sink in deeply. The idea is that we are not merely human beings living on earth and trying to make the best of it, but that we are children of God—still in the flesh for the present, but that is secondary. That is not what it really concerns. What it concerns is that we should now glorify God in our bodies.

Besides, we are human beings with our peculiarities, with our instincts. Nothing human is foreign to us. Must one condemn that? Christianity has gained the reputation of judging the flesh negatively and of regarding the natural instincts of man as sinful in themselves. That is a misunderstanding. It has been lost sight of. The point is that nothing has changed in that regard and that there is in itself nothing objectionable about it—for all things are lawful unto us. Moreover, we are speaking of an old creation, which in any case is a creation of God. The point is that there is something higher than that.

In the epistle to the Romans it is set forth at some length that sin should not have dominion over us. We have been delivered from the dominion of sin. Has the power of sin then changed? No, nothing has changed there. How then have we been delivered from it? Simply because there is a greater power in our life, a stronger dominion than that of sin. That power works in us. That power is called the Holy Spirit. In other words, Christ in you. Thereby the flesh is not humiliated. It remains what it was, with all its negative and all its positive aspects. Something rises far above it. We have been placed on a higher level. From that and in that we should walk and live. God is not glorified in our body by fighting against sins, but where our walk is to His glory and in some way made serviceable to His work.

The church is described as a temple, as a pillar and ground of the truth. Our responsibility is that we should hold to the truth—that we should keep it, know it, live from it, proclaim it.

Concerning marriage

1 Corinthians 7:1

Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

Can that not be put more delicately? Yes, it can—but it does not become any more pleasant for doing so.

The chapter falls into several distinct sections, though they are not sharply divided from one another; nonetheless, they are genuinely separate parts.

Verse 1 introduces the subject. It is a difficult subject, for although the Corinthians were entirely unreceptive to Paul's message, they nevertheless felt compelled to cross the threshold and write him at least one letter. One wonders whose marriage was in question, but we are not told. Perhaps it concerned marriage in general, even though that is not the level at which we should immediately suspect the Corinthians of thinking. Nevertheless, Paul addresses the matter in general terms.

The heading above the section reads "concerning marriage," but that is in some ways misleading. There will be further occasion later to go into the matter more deeply, and that will probably be necessary, since in our tradition marriage has been held in extremely high esteem. That is precisely the great problem we have with this chapter. Although Paul takes marriage with the utmost seriousness, there is in his view something that rises far above it and to which marriage is heavily subordinate—namely, our service to the Lord. That of every believer, of course. Whether marriage is an advantage or a disadvantage in that regard does not emerge entirely clearly, but along the way we are duly warned.

Since the days of Romanticism—a certain period in cultural history—we have idealised marriage. Marriage, we say, should be entered into on the ground of love. That is what it is all supposed to be about. That is not directly a biblical conception, as this chapter itself makes plain. Marriage is relativised and reduced to what it truly is by biblical standards. That does not always correspond to prevailing ideas about marriage in a given time and society. It depends on the circumstances.

In the Netherlands today it is easier to speak about whether women should wear hats in the gatherings or not. The whole choice of words and approach on that subject can only be explained from the common practice of the time. One can detach it from that

context, but in that case one would have expected it to be formulated differently. The message itself is not altered, but the manner in which it is presented comes from a particular background. That cannot be avoided. That is simply how these things work. For the sake of clarity: this chapter was written by Paul and stands in the Bible. Any complaints about it should therefore be addressed to God.

It is good for a man not to touch a woman. These are difficult subjects, because they cut deeply into human experience—and certainly into that of the believer, who is expected to take life rather more seriously than the unbeliever. That is why we are taken aback by the way Paul begins. First he makes some general recommendations about marriage, and the first noun he uses is “fornication.” Why should a person marry? Since Romanticism we say it is on the ground of love, but Paul says a person had better marry because of fornication. If a man is married he no longer needs to go to prostitutes.

1 Corinthians 7:2

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

The intention is that one should not go from one to another, for that is fornication. God did not intend it so from the beginning.

Marriage as we know it is in principle a divine institution. It is not a sacrament, as the Roman Catholics have made it, but it is a divine institution. That is why marriage has lost so much of its value in our country. Hardly any value is attached to it any more. That is of course because God has been abolished. To the extent that it still retains any value at all, we now of course recognise homosexual marriage. That is not what marriage is, but who nowadays is still supposed to tell us what marriage is? It comes from the Bible, and that is that. If one no longer acknowledges that, then one has lost all norms and values—and for convenience we include marriage among them.

1 Corinthians 7:3

Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

In former times this too stood in the marriage register: that husband and wife are bound to render to one another what is due, though it was omitted to define what was due. That is what all those lawsuits are about. In former times the husband was obliged to maintain his wife; later it became that they must render to one another what is due. Well, onwards.

1 Corinthians 7:4

The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

Before one thinks this is only about sexuality, that is undoubtedly not the case. It will play a part, but in marriage husband and wife are expected to live in communion. That is not only sexual communion, but also economic and social. They form one household. That is what is described here. It means that one cannot simply walk away. That is not the intention. The wife has not power over her own body, and vice versa. They are bound to one another. In former times at least one was obliged to cohabit. Later it was turned the other way round: that if one cohabited one was obliged to marry—but that was never enacted in law.

One should therefore live together in every respect.

1 Corinthians 7:5

Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Do not defraud one another of the marital obligations, unless by mutual consent for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

A reason for such temporary withdrawal might be prayer and fasting.

“Prayer” has a far broader meaning than speaking to God. In Scripture “prayer” is the comprehensive term for a life devoted to God—not only with the tongue but with all our members. That the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands. There may be occasions when one must for a moment lower one’s hands. Both prayer and the lifting up of holy hands are figurative. Prayer and the lifting up of holy hands means that one places one’s hands at the disposal of the living God to serve Him. Another statement about prayer is: “Pray without ceasing.” Some do that. They are extremely useless to society.

It is ora et labora—pray and work. Those two belong together and are in fact one whole. One serves the Lord in submission to Him. Thereby we give Him honour. We do so in His strength.

Everyone knows that prayer is characteristic of Christianity. Someone said: “We are still evangelical, still Christian, because we still pray before meals.” But it is not merely praying before meals; the whole life is prayer—adoring as well as asking. Whether a prayer is giving or asking, in every case it is addressed to Someone greater than the one who prays.

“Fasting” = abstinence in marriage.

Fasting and prayer is the designation for our not occupying ourselves with the world but with the work of the Lord.

Paul says that if believers must be apart for a time—not in the sense of dissolving the marriage, but in the sense of not cohabiting for a while—he can only imagine it when one must be away for a time to do the work of the Lord, for that is higher than marriage. He relativises marriage, but he does so over against the work of the Lord, which rises above it. Marriage should therefore be subordinate to that.

“Devote yourselves” = empty oneself of the one thing. Act as though one were not married, because there are other things that for some reason are more important.

It is added that it is only for a limited time.

Afterwards one should come together again, lest Satan tempt you because you may not be able to contain yourselves. Then one naturally falls into fornication.

For a time it may be so, but better not.

1 Corinthians 7:6

But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.
It is advice.

1 Corinthians 7:7

For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

Paul did not occupy himself with fornication, but neither was he married. What he writes in verses 2–7 therefore does not apply to himself.

It is not an iron rule, for in the same epistle Paul writes that all things are lawful. They remain recommendations. They concern matters that one cannot easily keep in order—partly because they are to a high degree emotionally determined. That can thoroughly unsettle a person, and so Paul explains how these things roughly stand. Paul himself is different.

Nevertheless, it is clearly stated that we should abstain from fornication.

It is rather strange that Paul here mentions himself and says he wished all men were as he himself was. One wonders what that means. In the following verses he speaks not so much about marriage but about widowers and widows.

“Widow” = a woman whose husband has died. The problem is that Greek has no word for “widower”—a man whose wife has died. How then does one name him if it must be in one word? We have the word “widower,” but in Greek...?

1 Corinthians 7:8

I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

It says “the unmarried and the widows.” Evidently it means: “I say to the widowers and the widows.”

In general Paul had already said it is good not to touch a woman, but here he speaks of a separate category—those whose marriage has been dissolved by death.

“The unmarried” in this case therefore means widowers. That appears from the context and the structure of the passage. It seems Paul himself was a widower. That seems the obvious conclusion. It is nowhere else stated, but this verse suggests it.

We first meet Paul in Acts 7 at the stoning of Stephen. We assume he was still a young man there. Afterwards we meet him as the leader of the persecution of Christians. He was therefore no longer a small boy. In Scripture the term “young man” is applied to anyone not older than thirty-nine years. After all, life only begins at forty. If you are below that age, you are young. After that the decline begins. Then you are no longer a young man but an elder. In other words, Paul may well have been around forty already.

It has never been entirely certain, but Scripture at least suggests that Paul had been a member of the Sanhedrin. He mentions on one occasion that he consented to the persecution of Christians. If that is to be taken literally, he voted in the Sanhedrin assembly. The other suggestion is that if he held a prominent position and stood directly under the high priest’s authority, one may assume he belonged to the chief priests and to the members of the Sanhedrin. Moreover, he writes in Galatians 1 that he profited in the Jews’ religion above many of his equals in his own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. It does not seem that could be said of someone of about twenty. He must therefore already have been older at that time.

From Jewish tradition we know that the man in the first place was expected to marry. In Judaism there are 613 commandments. The first of them concerns marriage. That is at any rate rule number one for the man. The Jew who has no wife is no man. According to the Mishnah (the so-called oral teaching of the Torah, which contains explanations of the commandments and prohibitions in the law of Moses, set down in writing in the

second century), the marriageable age for a man is eighteen years. Ideally he should already be married by then. He himself need do nothing about it, for his parents arrange it. Moreover, anyone who is a member of the Sanhedrin must be married. He must fulfil all the commandments, and certainly that first one.

In other words, although nothing specific is stated, that is all the more reason to assume that Paul had been married.

1 Corinthians 7:8

I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

Widower, then, and not remarried.

That immediately explains quite another aspect—namely the remarkable fact that the man who is assumed never to have been married must now tell us how it is with marriage.

From his standpoint, marriage would stand in the way of his running his race.

1 Corinthians 7:9

But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. Matters relating to sexuality are usually not spoken of openly, because a person's sexual life is no concern of another's, and because from ancient times the view has prevailed that young people should be kept as far as possible from sexuality, lest things go wrong. It is therefore always spoken of in veiled terms—the world over, in all cultures, and it has always been so.

Verses 10–16 do not concern marriage but divorce—though it remains a question what one should understand by divorce. That is because marriage was never defined, and divorce therefore logically was not either.

We do not live under the law, but when the law says “thou shalt not commit adultery,” what does that mean? That one may go on committing adultery all one's life, or otherwise withdraw from marriage, so long as one remains officially married? It is not after all about some partnership one has set up that must remain on paper while one pays no further attention to it? In the Bible that is adultery.

The example of the Lord and Israel. Israel went a-whoring and played the harlot with every man. She even went soliciting. The Lord then sent her away with a bill of divorcement. What then is adultery—what Israel did, or what God did afterwards? It seems Israel committed adultery and the Lord then dissolved the marriage. “My covenant which they brake” (Jeremiah 31:32). They did not dissolve the marriage with the Lord, but paid no attention to it. The agreement remained in force. Then the Lord dissolved the agreement. Is that forbidden? If a marriage no longer exists in practice and in any case no longer answers to the standard, one may as well lawfully put an end to it. To call that last adultery? It depends on what one understands by it.

There was a time when marriage was held in the highest esteem. It stood above everything. What one then got up to in marriage did not matter, but the marriage had to be maintained.

1 Corinthians 7:10 -11

And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

Evidently divorce is nonetheless among the possibilities. The wife is not to depart from her husband, and the husband is not to put away his wife.

But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband.

Husband and wife are expected to live together. On occasion one or other of them finds it no longer desirable—for whatever reason—and leaves. Whether this involves a lawful dissolution of the marriage is not mentioned. Apparently that is not the point at issue.

A lawful dissolution of marriage is indeed regulated in the Old Testament. It is therefore not contrary to the law, since the law itself regulates it.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery,” yet in another law the dissolution of marriage is regulated, which shows that adultery is not the same as dissolving a marriage.

Adultery is unfaithfulness, or more specifically committing adultery, which is not necessarily the same thing, for unfaithfulness does not automatically imply physical adultery. If one withdraws from the other, there is unfaithfulness. That is adultery. Once that has occurred, even under the law the marriage may be lawfully dissolved. In such a case the marriage is not to be restored.

The intention is that the lawful marriage should remain intact and perhaps after a time be restored.

If husband and wife separate temporarily with the intention of coming together again afterwards, that is evidently still called separation. We call it separation from bed and board. A table is a figure of fellowship.

In the case of a lawful dissolution of marriage we generally read that there is no longer any question of restoration. It is therefore not about a piece of paper, about an official legal matter—though marriage is regulated by law, even in the Bible. The essence of marriage is not determined by a marriage certificate but by living together as such. That is what Paul is speaking of.

1 Corinthians 7:12 -13

But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

In verses 10 and 11 the case concerns two believers in a marriage. Of them Paul says, on the Lord's authority, that the wife is not to depart from her husband, nor the husband put away his wife. But what if a believer is married to an unbeliever? Here Paul gives advice. From God's standpoint we do not live under the law. The only thing left, therefore, is advice. Standards and examples to which we should look, ideals. As children we need ideals so that we have something to aim our lives at. As adults those ideals disappear because we discover they cannot be realised. That is why old people often look so grumpy. Young people still expect something from life, have ideals and strive after them, but after a few decades they realise nothing will come of those ideals. What then is left? Just getting by.

Paul says: “I speak, not the Lord.” There is no law for this. A marriage between a believer and an unbeliever can never be ideal, of course. Fundamentally it cannot function, for marriage presupposes fellowship. If that fellowship does not exist on the spiritual level—because one is a believer and the other is not—then the rest does not amount to much either. There is not really a marriage. It may be possible to live with it, but that is open to question. Paul says that if it is not possible to live with it, then dissolve it. If it is possible to live with it—well then, stay together. It is not ideal.

If the unbelieving wife is content to dwell with the believing husband, then she may remain with him. The whole point, of course, is that the believing husband should live as a believing husband and therefore first and foremost serve the Lord. Whether the unbeliever can go along with that seems rather unlikely—unless the believer makes concessions for the sake of the marriage. That is dangerous ground.

When the Lord Jesus spoke with His disciples about marriage, the disciples said: “If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.” They had understood it correctly (Matthew 19:3–12).

Of course one can imagine an ideal picture of marriage, but ideals are seldom realised. Of course there are ideals, and one aims at them and strives after them, but that is all. This is not meant pessimistically; it is simply how life works.

People often have far too high expectations of life and are therefore deeply disappointed. Should one then have no high expectations of life? One should be realistic. The best thing is to learn as early as possible how things really are.

1 Corinthians 7:14

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

Holy and unclean are therefore opposites. What is holy is clean. When one is cleansed, one is sanctified. And therefore, if one is not sanctified, one is unclean. Everything that is holy is holy because it is set apart for the service of God.

In a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, the believer is the standard, for Paul is of course not writing to unbelievers. The thought is simply that if the two form one life-partnership and one is set apart for the service of God, then the other is too. The unbeliever can reap the benefit of that. The Lord blesses the one who serves Him, and the other reaps the fruit of it, for it is one household. They are reckoned by God as one. Not on the ground that a couple of signatures have been put on paper at the register office, but because they live and dwell together as man and wife. That is in practice a marriage. All who belong to the household of that one believer are considered holy, because through that one believer they have part in the service of God, with all the consequences that follow.

Children are children because they are not reckoned independently; they bear no responsibility of their own. That is why they are identified with their parents. If the parents are blessed, the children are blessed; if the parents are cursed, the children are cursed. They do not exist separately but form part of the parents—in this case, of course, of the believing parent. That means they are reckoned as belonging to the church so long as they cannot bear responsibility of their own. That this is so appears from the fact that Paul addresses children directly, which means he reckons them as part of the church. That would also mean that if the rapture of the church were to take

place today, the children would be taken up with the believing parent(s). One may say they are not born again, but they are children. One should not even ask whether they are born again, for they are children. They do not bear that responsibility but fall under the responsibility of the parents—and in this case under the responsibility of the believing parent, with whom they are reckoned as one. Therefore the apostle says: “If possible, stay together.” If it is not possible, very well, then not.

1 Corinthians 7:15

But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

The brother or sister is then not under bondage and may therefore possibly remarry. But God hath called us to peace. Marriage is often strife. People speak mockingly of a “fighting union.” Where a marriage consists of strife, it is hard to regard it as a marriage, for marriage consists in unity. Maintaining a marriage that in no way answers to that standard is not what the Lord requires of us. What the standard is remains our own responsibility. God hath called us to peace...

1 Corinthians 7:16

For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

You may think it will all turn out well, but we do not know. There is no guarantee. It is a question of whether one can live with it in the present or not.

The unbelieving husband is therefore sanctified by the believing wife, and vice versa. The children are also considered holy. That sanctification does not mean they suddenly become children of God. That is not what the word means. A poker used to stir the fire on the altar of burnt offering was holy, but not born again. It was carefully maintained and cleaned and set apart for the Lord’s service. It is on another level. The same applies to unbelieving spouses. It indicates a privileged position. They come under the word, but whether that leads to their conversion is another matter. You do not know—and that is what verse 16 says about it.

Whether such a marriage can be continued depends on the practical circumstances. It also depends on what demands one makes of marriage and whether those demands can be adjusted or borne. That varies greatly from person to person, for people are not all the same.

The next section—verses 17–24—recommends that one should not seek changes in one’s general situation. Verses 25–31 are much the same, recommending that one should not seek a change in civil status.

1 Corinthians 7:17

But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

You are single or married and come to faith. Then remain what you were—single or married. Or you were a slave and come to faith and remain a slave; or you were free and come to faith and remain free. These are things that do not directly concern your faith.

1 Corinthians 7:18

Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.

Can someone who is circumcised have a foreskin restored? Yes, that can be done. Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. Acts 15 deals with whether Gentiles who come to faith must still be circumcised. The answer is no—on the contrary.

1 Corinthians 7:19

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

It is something, but it means nothing. It is of no consequence. What matters is the keeping of the commandments of God. The formulation “keeping of the commandments of God” has been determined by the words “uncircumcision” and “circumcision.” Already in the Old Testament it says that one should hear the words of God and let one’s heart be circumcised. That means the covering of the heart should be removed. “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart.” These expressions come from that. One must certainly not infer from this that as a believer one should live under the law. If that were so, circumcision would belong to it as well. Covenant theologians have invented that we must live under the law, but since circumcision is rather a painful business, they have devised that baptism has taken the place of circumcision. That is how elegantly such matters are solved.

1 Corinthians 7:20

Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

Everyone remains in the position in which he stood when he came to faith. Not that it cannot or may not change, but it has nothing to do with one’s faith. Because you have come to faith you do not now suddenly need to be circumcised.

1 Corinthians 7:21

Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

If you can become free, fine. It is not necessary, but then you have more opportunity to devote your life to the Lord’s service.

1 Corinthians 7:22

For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ’s servant.

Paul immediately relativises it. Even if you are a slave, if you have come to faith you are nonetheless the Lord’s freeman. The liberty in which we stand is not physical liberty but spiritual liberty. That is a liberty brought about by the truth. We should understand the truth, and the truth shall make us free. So even as a slave one can in that sense be free. One can also put it the other way round. We may be the Lord’s freemen, but if we were free and were called, we have become Christ’s servant. It depends on how one looks at it.

1 Corinthians 7:23

Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

This summary we already had at the end of chapter 6, so one sees that it is essentially still about the same thing—namely our earthly, fleshly circumstances, which evidently mattered greatly to the Corinthians and which evidently also matter greatly to present-day Christians, as appears from the literature on the average book table.

We should serve the Lord and let Him live our lives, rather than our surroundings or our circumstances.

It will be clear that the physical constitution of man brings with it certain desires that are honoured in marriage. That is also the intention, and marriage exists in large measure for that purpose, but marriage nonetheless stands somewhat in the way of the individual and takes away a measure of his liberty. That is why Paul says it is good to be unmarried, but that for some it is better to be married. That has to do with natural constitution. Paul himself can manage well alone, but that is purely personal.

1 Corinthians 7:24

Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

For these are things that do not directly concern one another.

In verses 25–31 it continues in exactly the same vein. One should remain in the civil state in which one was called. That is the recommendation.

1 Corinthians 7:25

Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

A “virgin” = an unmarried woman.

There is no commandment from the Lord Himself, but the Lord has counted him faithful, having put him into the ministry (1 Timothy 1:12).

The Lord has placed him in this ministry, and so he nonetheless says what he thinks.

1 Corinthians 7:26

I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be.

Namely unmarried. He considers that good because of the present distress. There seem to be people who do not understand this, but that is because marriage has been idealised. Young people too often have problems with themselves and think that if only they were once married and thus began to live as adults, then everything would naturally turn out well and the distress would be over. The Bible teaches the opposite: that marriage brings distress with it. After all, one must reckon with another person. To avoid that present distress it is better not to marry.

The immediate reaction is of course: “I am married, so I had better divorce.” Paul reacts to that at once.

1 Corinthians 7:27 -28

Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

Those who marry will have trouble in the flesh, for marriage is by definition a fleshly institution with regard to the old man. Of course that does not say everything. The point

remains that we who are born again have received new life in these old bodies, and these old bodies are expected to have been made alive. Marriage can be a hindrance in that regard. At any rate, that is how Paul experienced it for himself.

Trouble in the flesh is inherent to marriage.

Paul seeks to spare them that, and so the “present distress” of verse 26 is explained here in verse 28.

Life is full of compromises, even in our service to the Lord. There are simply things that cannot be done because of circumstances. Then one must make the best of it. That is how life is. Ideals exist, but in practice they are usually unattainable. 1 Corinthians 7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

Marriage does not rank at the top of Paul’s list, nor therefore of the believer’s. The primary concern is serving the Lord. Marriage should be subordinate to that—or better still, serviceable to it.

The time is short — some have wished to put into Paul’s mouth with this statement that he expected the return of Christ, or the rapture of the church, within the foreseeable future, within that generation. That seems unlikely. For everything he writes shows that he did not expect the rapture of the church to be imminent. He did expect it, but not soon. The time that is short is the time remaining to us in the flesh. That is always short, for we are here only for a very little while. It may not seem so when one stands at the beginning of life, but when one is past thirty-nine, one thinks: “Where has the time gone?” In the time remaining in the flesh we should fulfil the will of God and not the will of the Gentiles (1 Peter 4:2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.).

1 Corinthians 7:30

And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

Paul relativises earthly circumstances. It is all temporary.

1 Corinthians 7:31

And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

We make use of the world. There is no alternative. As to the old man we form part of it. Yet we should not abuse it. To abuse it is to consider the world more important than our relationship with the Lord. That of course concerns the practical relationship with the Lord and therefore our service to Him.

The fashion of this world passeth away — the form of this world passes away. One may say that the world is that form, for the whole world consists of tangible things. One may also take it as the present form of society, of culture. That too is relative, for if one is a few years further on, the norms have changed again. The world changes through changing ideas in society. The world is temporary and culture-bound and therefore constantly changing. Mistakenly one regards change as progress. Progress is change, but change is usually not progress.

1 Corinthians 7:32

But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

1 Corinthians 7:33 -35

But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

Whoever marries does well, but whoever does not marry does better. That is the general thrust of the chapter, for the simple reason that marriage brings trouble with it, and that trouble is impending when one intends to marry.

In marriage one is pulled this way and that.

The intention is that we as believers should cleave to the Lord without being pulled this way and that (verse 35).

The marriage of a believer should at most come second.

The following verses are somewhat obscure, in the sense that when one reads this passage one usually wonders seriously what Paul is talking about.

The problem with the subject is also that we generally keep silent about it, because it is not suitable for publication. That is probably also the reason why, when these things are discussed, they are discussed in veiled terms.

The idea is that what follows must somehow be connected with what has gone before.

1 Corinthians 7:36 -38

But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.

What on earth is this about?

But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age... Who is this? Who keeps a virgin on hand?

And need so require... What is required in that way? And why must it be done in a certain way?

Let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

The virgin herself is not involved at all. She has no voice and cannot choose at all whether she will marry or not.

We then think of a father with a daughter.

Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart... Evidently only the father decides.

Having no necessity, but hath power over his own will... That man should not have power over his own will but over his daughter.

In short, with all these terms one can get nowhere.

Let us start again from the beginning.

If any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age... What unseemly behaviour is this about? Marrying off one's daughter?

If she pass the flower of her age and need so require...

In what way?

Let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

Who are "they" who marry? There is no way to fit a traditional picture of a father who has a daughter to be married off.

He that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity... What necessity?

But hath power over his own will... And hath so decreed in his heart... One may also make that known to the daughter—what he has decided and whatever it may be about. This is surely not something that should be kept hidden.

To decree something in one's heart = someone takes a decision for himself and does not make it known to others. Must his daughter then not know?

That he will keep his virgin... For whom, then?

All these remarks are easily explained once one understands that veiled terms are used here. It concerns a subject that is normally not discussed in public. It concerns self-gratification. That is not spoken of openly. It is no one else's business. Moreover, one should not make young boys wiser than they already are. One need not speak about it beforehand. Nature takes its course. That is what this is about.

When the apostle describes various circumstances one after another and keeps coming back to the fact that marriage comes second and is not to be recommended for a believer and so forth, and when he is so negative about marriage, what then about sex? What about the hormones? It is a natural matter, we have been taught. It has been made into something that is indeed natural but sinful by definition. That is reinforced by the idea that one does not speak about it. It is a sort of taboo and therefore must be no good.

That is what Paul is talking about, and then it becomes a logical discourse.

Although the word "virgin" is used, what is meant is "virginity."

It is a feminine word, but if one counts the virgins who appear in the Bible, by far the greatest number are male. In Revelation 7 alone there are 144,000. It therefore does not refer specifically to a woman. Those 144,000 sealed in Revelation 7 were virgins—namely, not defiled with women. A virgin is therefore just as much a male concept.

1 Corinthians 7:36

But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

If any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely... This therefore concerns men.

If any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virginity, if that virginity pass the flower of her age. That is a matter of hormones. Nature stirs. That can be quite troublesome in a person's life and certainly in that of a young person. Then something must happen. One therefore seeks a partner and marries, for that is the official biblical ideal.

But if Paul now says one had better not marry, what then? Then one comes to self-gratification. That it must be so done, in an improper way.

If it must be so, then let it be so. Let him do what he will, he sinneth not. Let them marry — but that word too is a euphemism, just like “virgin.” Behind “virgin” stands “virginity” and behind “marry” stands the concept of sexual activity. The Luther translation has: “Lass Sie freien.” Not “marry” but “woo” or “court.” That comes rather closer.

1 Corinthians 7:37

Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

If one does not suffer too much from one’s hormones and can control oneself so as to keep one’s virginity, then one does well.

Passion is linked with sexuality, but passion is suffering. Passion is that one becomes subject to forces stronger than oneself. That sometimes happens. In this connection it indeed plays a role. Then one loses one’s will. If he hath so decreed in his heart (it concerns no one else), that he will keep his virginity, doeth well. It does not even say “doeth better,” but “doeth well.”

1 Corinthians 7:38

So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.

“Giveth in marriage” is synonymous with “marry,” where the Luther translation has “freien.” They are polite terms. Anyone who does not know what self-gratification is will not discover it from this passage of Scripture. That is undoubtedly the intention of the veiled terms. Whether it accords with Christian tradition is beside the point. In general self-gratification brings feelings of guilt. That is also because it is talked into one. It is not allowed and therefore forbidden and therefore done secretly, and if done secretly then it is sinful. All sorts of threats are attached to it. If you do it, then this or that will happen, or later this or that.

It is therefore quite logical that Paul devotes a few words to it here. It is little enough, but nonetheless clear enough.

Whoever does it does well, and whoever does not do it does better.

1 Corinthians 7:39

The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:40

But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

We already had this in connection with the widows and widowers. The fact that he returns to it at the end of this chapter and in effect says the same thing again suggests that this comes closest to his personal situation, because he was most probably a widower himself. He had been married and become a widower. Here he says that she is happier if she so abides, after his judgment. According to his experience she will then be happier. That is simply his experience. He is not a woman but a man, yet in the same position.

And I think also that I have the Spirit of God. With this he emphatically says that marriage is all right, but do not think that marriage is the highest thing. One should not first and foremost serve one another and seek the meaning of life in the earthly, for the meaning of life is found in our service to the Lord. To that end one should be free. How free? Paul says one had better not be married. That is his view, but we are not all the same. For another it may be better to marry.

Was this all about marriage or about sexuality? About both, for those two things belong together. Sexuality is supposed to belong in marriage and not outside it.

Concerning meat offered to idols

What does not come across so emphatically here is that sexuality and idolatry have from ancient times been closely linked. Not necessarily, and not under all circumstances, but nonetheless the concepts are tightly connected. This has to do with people seeking means of intoxication so as to be freed from the daily circumstances and responsibilities that go with them—the yoke that rests upon us and the thoughts that occupy us. One wants to be carried away in the spirit. That happens on the emotional level and has to do with ecstasy. Sometimes people seek it with literal intoxicants, such as alcohol and narcotics. These are things that remove control and awareness of our position and responsibility. They run away with our thoughts, and that is experienced as liberating. In reality one might as well be dead, for one is momentarily absent. It runs away with one; one no longer knows who one is, where one is, or what one is doing. One is “high,” as it is called. In fact one is not high, but low.

Where sexuality can bring a person into ecstasy, it is placed on the level of spirituality, of spiritual transport. It all has to do with passion—with a power coming over one that takes hold of one. And so sexuality was from ancient times connected with idolatry. In the Old Testament one reads about the groves. On occasion the high places and the altars of idols were broken down, along with the groves. What is not stated—and what one never discovers unless one goes looking for it—is that those groves were phallic symbols, representations of the male organ, as figures of sexuality. Of course one does not say so plainly, for it is religion, and so one says it is a fertility symbol. That is the positive spin put upon it, but in reality it concerns sexual symbols. That they may have to do with fertility is of course true, but why then do such things end up in the world of idolatry? That has to do with their ecstatic character. That is why one also finds religious prostitution. The Bible does not describe it, but it does mention it—if one pays attention. Quite a number of idols are at the same time sexual symbols, both male and female. And so one naturally passes from chapter 7 into chapter 8.

Not that sexuality still plays a role here, but there is nonetheless a logical connection between the two.

1 Corinthians 8:1

Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

Idols exist first and foremost in people’s thoughts, in their experience. That is what Paul says later. In the second place idolatry expresses itself in the various symbols—such as the idol images and then of course also the attributes that belong to them, such as the idolatrous temples in all their kinds and sizes.

More particularly, in New Testament times we come to where food—that is, in the first place meat—was prepared for the gods. It was first given to the idols. The gods did not eat the meat, and so it was taken back; one said thank you to the idol, and then they ate what the deity had given them.

The priests under the Old Covenant had to bring the offerings for the people. They laid the meat on the altar, so to speak, but then took part of the meat off again, for that was for themselves. They ate of the altar. They lived from the service of God, and that is called “eating of the altar.”

Eating of the altar is mentioned not only in connection with idolatrous worship but also in connection with our life as children of God, for Hebrews 13 says that we too have an altar from which we eat, because we too (if all is well) have offered everything we have to the Lord. We have after all presented our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God—which does not prevent us from using that same body for ourselves afterwards. We do so with thanksgiving, for in so far as we can, we have received it from the Lord. That is no joke, but very real. For we have died with Christ, and in so far as we yet live unto God, it is because He has given us life, or rather made us alive—including our body. We use that body with thanksgiving. We have given it to Him, but receive it back to use.

In idolatry something similar happened—at least with food. One offered it to the deity, or whatever passed for one, and then took it back with thanksgiving. The question then is whether food that has first been dedicated to idols may be eaten by us as children of God who do not worship idols. Of course it may, for we know no idols.

In short, if one puts the question more broadly: what are we to do with all the idolatry around us? That is what this chapter is about.

Now as touching things offered unto idols... the sentence continues in verse 4. In fact he starts afresh there and goes on with “we know that.” He interrupts himself, as it were, and says: “we know that we all have knowledge.” We know a thing or two. That matters if one is to say anything about these things. But if it were only knowledge, then that would puff up. Man is filled with knowledge, and the more that comes in, the more puffed up one becomes.

Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

Knowing, knowledge, and acknowledging are not merely words for what we know—not merely factual knowledge, but also experience. One does not only know about it but has part in it. Knowledge is therefore practical knowledge. That is why the word is synonymous with loving—namely having part in...When Paul writes, “then shall I know even as also I am known,” he is not speaking merely of knowing but of having part in, having fellowship with...Here knowledge is set over against love, as though they were different things. Thereby the concept of knowing is limited in its general meaning to knowing facts. Then knowing is objective.

We know that we all have knowledge, but knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

Paul presents us here with a situation in which we do indeed know certain things for ourselves and have part in them; that is why it is called knowledge. But the intention is that we as children of God should in the practice of our lives form part of the church, of which we are living stones. We are the temple of God and are joined together. In short, we are not divided, as the Corinthians were, but all form part of one and the same body of Christ. If our knowledge—and thereby also our manner of life—then separates us

again from our brothers and sisters, something is wrong. That is at any rate not the intention.

What Paul brings forward here is that all things are lawful unto us, but that attitude can also cause division. We know no idolatry. We know but one God. We have no problem at all with eating meat offered to idols. But if that attitude in practice brings division in the church, then we had better accommodate our brothers and sisters who do have difficulty with it. And why not? We should not be brought under the power of that liberty. Things that are lawful are not thereby obligatory. In other words, we can perfectly well decide, for the sake of our brothers and sisters, not to eat meat offered to idols. One does not want to give others offence or cause problems over it. One should have a little understanding for one another.

Knowledge alone puffs up. Then there is no love either. Love builds up. Keep in mind the picture of the temple. Love joins. The stones are joined together. In Ephesians 4:16 there is mention of members of the body being fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part. That is love. Love, which is the bond of perfectness—the perfect bond. That is what it is about. Later, in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul returns to it. Though he had all spiritual gifts, or though he knew everything there is to know and understood all mysteries and spoke with the tongues of men and of angels, but had not love, he would make a lot of noise, as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, but musically it would contribute nothing, so to speak. It is about fellowship, for that is how the church is built. First the individual believer and from there fellowship with fellow believers.

When wrongly applied, knowledge can indeed cause division. The highest goal is not knowledge as such, but the building up of the church. The problem in practice is that we must therefore make judgments. That is what Paul does and sets before us.

1 Corinthians 8:2

And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

One should know as one ought to know. One should know things, but one should also know how to handle them, to practise the knowledge.

1 Corinthians 8:3

But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

Here one sees that loving and knowing are the same thing. Where we know Him, there He knows, acknowledges, and confesses us.

Now Paul takes up the thread from verse 1 again.

1 Corinthians 8:4

As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

That is what he wanted to speak about—the meat offered to idols—but first he warns that it concerns the fellowship of believers.

Paul says that idols do not exist at all. We all know that, for there is but one God. We are expected to be monotheists; then it really comes from only one loudspeaker. There are no other gods besides that One.

The Jewish confession says: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD!” (Deuteronomy 6:4). There is but one Lord. There are no others. There are those who are called gods, but they are not real. They do exist, but they are not gods. They are mistakenly called gods and allow themselves to be so addressed. 1 Corinthians 8:5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

There are those called gods, and Paul leaves open where those people are. Whether in heaven or on earth. Both are therefore possible.

s there be gods many, and lords many. At least, they are so called.

1 Corinthians 8:6

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

There is but one God, namely the Father. And we have but one Lord, namely Jesus Christ. It should be clear that it concerns the same One. We know but one God, namely one Lord. There are not two, let alone three. The One is the Father and the Other is the Son, but it is but one God.

There are those called gods, but there are no idols and we do not call them gods either. The question whether we may eat meat offered to idols need not even be answered, for we know there are no idols. Why should one not eat what has been offered to something that does not exist? It is all fake and hot air. Well, largely so.

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things. The expression “of whom are all things” is the explanation of the word “Father.” We tend to connect fatherhood with sonship and in this case to read: One Father and one Lord, namely the Son Jesus Christ. The word “Son” is not there. The word “Father” here does not directly concern the Lord Jesus Christ being regarded as the Son of God, but the Father, of whom are all things.

Father = origin of things; the giver; the begetter.

God is therefore called Father because all things are of Him. Even on a lower level people are called fathers in that connection because they have begotten certain things. God is the Creator of heaven and earth, the Origin of the universe. We know Him in the person of the Lord, namely Jehovah, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by Him. God as Origin of things, but also as Sustainer of things. We know Him as God the Creator—all things are of Him—but also as the One by whom all things consist. He is the Creator, but also the Upholder of all things. That we know...

1 Corinthians 8:7

Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge, so that room is left for discussion, so that it is demonstrated that indeed not everyone has that knowledge. On the other hand, in so far as we had not understood it, 1 Corinthians 10:20 states that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God.

Another biblical term for devils is evil spirits. Those are no gods. Mistakenly one assumes that since devils have no body and are therefore purely spiritual, they are higher in rank and power than man. That is a misunderstanding. When a man dies he

too loses his body and is then only spirit. Is he thereby promoted? Does a man become more than he originally was when he dies? Far from it, for he has lost something. Then he is missing something. If one is missing something, one is at any rate less capable. So it is with devils too.

Evil spirits are devils, and devils are spirits of people who have died. Not of the people who have died, but of people who died before Adam. They have therefore been around a long time and still have some time to go. Nonetheless they will be judged in due course and presumably then disappear into the abyss. They are not higher than man but lower in rank. Yet they are regarded as higher than man, and if they are higher than man then they must be gods. That arises from man's own pride. In our day man thinks he himself is god. If he is not, then someone higher than man must be god. Thus devils have been promoted to gods, and they gladly allow it.

But they are no gods. They do exist, but are not called gods. We do not acknowledge them as God, for there is but one God. The intention is that we should ignore them and certainly not seek them. If one accepts something offered to idols, that can be explained as giving honour to the idols—even if that is not the intention. It can also be explained as simply ignoring them and therefore truly giving them no honour. It depends on how others interpret it, and therein lies the practical problem.

Though there be that are called gods. There are therefore so-called gods. They are not, but are wrongly so named.

Besides the category of devils, we of course also have to do with possible angels from heaven and ultimately with the angel of light, the devil. Those are idols that are still higher than we are. Normally, however, we have to do with devils. That amounts to nothing, but they allow themselves to be treated as gods. In the epistle to Timothy we read that if anyone esteems anything unclean, to him it is unclean. The variant on that is: if anyone esteems something or someone to be a god, to him it is so.

But we know there are no gods.

“Conscience” here is not a good translation. It is not the usual word for what the Bible calls conscience (*suneidēsis*), but a word that carries the meaning of custom or habit. The idea is that they were accustomed to reckoning with their idol. In short, they were until this hour in practice idolaters.

Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

“Until this hour” — the hopeful thought behind it is that one day it will pass away, and that they will eventually learn that idols are nothing and that the whole concept of an idol will disappear from their consciousness and therefore also from their habit (translated here as “conscience”). Some still have the habit of the idol until this hour. Believers can indeed still be influenced by demons. They eat something that in their eyes has been offered to idols. We know that is not the case, for such things do not exist, but for them they do. The result is that their conscience (now the right word), being weak, is defiled. Their conscience is weak because they do not have that knowledge. They may know about it, but they do not truly know it. They know of it, but they are not free from their old way of thinking.

It is much the same as people who know they are free from the law. They believe it, but in the practice of their lives they remain stuck in those compulsive patterns. Even though one knows one has been delivered from it, one still remains bound to it. That is

why Paul says in Romans 8 that one is only practically delivered from the law as one learns to live under the alternative—namely grace.

In general, one does not break free from a habit or custom from one moment to the next. That takes time. We know the saying: once Reformed, always Reformed. You never really get free of it. That is not strictly true, but it does seem very difficult. That is what this is about.

Those who had the habit of the idol now have problems with their conscience. They were idolaters, but now they know there is only one God. If something has nonetheless been offered to idols, then they have trouble with their conscience, because they are not truly free of it.

1 Corinthians 8:8

But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

Food does not commend us to God. What we eat makes no difference to God. It is not quite so easy to be pleasing to God. It is not simply a matter of applying the right diet. It comes down to this: for a believer it makes no difference whether the food has been offered to idols or not.

1 Corinthians 8:9

But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

“Liberty” = right. The right to eat something offered to idols.

We who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak (Romans 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.). We should therefore take account of them. Paul explains:

1 Corinthians 8:10

For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

Someone with that weak conscience should certainly not do so. As a weak person you may well say you have been delivered from idols, but that does not mean you really have been. If you can say there are no idols at all, then indeed you have nothing whatever to do with them and you are strong. We should take account of those who are weak.

1 Corinthians 8:11

And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? Through your knowledge—and thereby also your manner of life.

We should therefore take account of the weak, but Paul speaks of those who still have the habit of the idol until this hour. They already had it when they came to faith. For the present they are not yet free from idolatry. In other words, the intention and expectation is that they will one day be free of it, but they are not there yet.

Conversely, they are considered weak, implying that they are still weak until this hour. Babies are always like that—even spiritual babies. They have just been born again and are very vulnerable. They still need to grow up, to be taught, to gain knowledge and learn

to put those things into practice. In short, we should take account of those who are still weak.

The other way round, it is therefore not the case that we must take account of people who no longer have any habit of the idol at all and who suddenly get the idea that it is about idols and make a great issue of it. We should steer well clear of such people. We should not take account of them. On the contrary. They were not weak until this hour; they were strong but are becoming weak, or choosing to be weak.

We have a good example of that, but then in the practical application of the law. In Galatians 2 Paul withstood and rebuked Peter and Barnabas and others because they evidently took account of the visit from believers from Jerusalem. That is to say, Jewish believers from Jerusalem who had come to Antioch. They still had the habit of the law until this hour. They were still accustomed to living as they did before they came to conversion—namely under the Jewish system, with for example a kosher kitchen. Peter and even Barnabas, with whom Peter had been on missionary journeys and who was a generation older, suddenly began eating kosher again and adapted themselves to the visitors from Jerusalem. That was a development in the wrong direction. They were free from the law—Peter too—but under the influence of others who thought one should live under the Jewish law, they began to do so as well. That is a step backwards. The development should have been the other way round. Believers should not live under the law. We are free to order our lives as we wish, but if you think you must do certain things from God and consider that even important for your salvation, then that is not so. If someone who normally pays no attention to such religious things then adapts himself because others think it still ought to be done, then he is on the way back, and that is not the intention.

Fear of occultism is also completely unnecessary. One need not fight it, but one should pay no attention to it. If one pays no attention to it, it has no effect. The influence of evil spirits is where we open ourselves to it. First and foremost in our thoughts, but sometimes also physically, in our body. There is a good chance that evil spirits want to influence you. They prefer it when you are physically weak. When you have little resistance. You must therefore ensure you do have resistance, but sometimes that is not possible. Then we become weakened and things can go wrong. One often notices this with terminally ill people. They begin to behave in ways that do not suit them at all. It is often embarrassing, but in many cases it is a matter of demonism. Any physical recovery often resolves it as well.

People who focus on that spiritual influence often do so by weakening themselves. First of all by restricting their diet. Above all no meat. Starving oneself always works too. Anorexia nervosa probably also has a demonic background. The aim is to weaken the person so much that he no longer has resistance to demonic influence. If one knows that, it makes a great difference. If one does not know, it is regarded as illness. And it is illness, for a path is taken in the wrong direction, with the result that one can no longer turn back because one is so greatly weakened that one no longer has resistance to it and can no longer defend oneself against it.

The biblical idea is at any rate that we should live healthily and moreover pay no attention to evil spirits. That is not our world. If one thinks it is dangerous—well, we are the Lord's property and on that we should trust.

We should therefore take account of those who are still weak, so that we do not hinder their growth. One can certainly tell them that one has no difficulty eating meat offered to idols, but that does not mean one has to do it.

Just as Paul rebuked Peter sharply, so he says elsewhere that he became a Jew to the Jews. In order to preach the gospel he adapted himself to the Jewish way of life. Why not? It is not obligatory to pay no attention to Jewish food laws, nor is it obligatory to pay attention to them. For practical reasons one chooses one or the other. It is clear that Paul puts on the brakes when people move towards those religious things, but he takes account of the people who still need to be delivered from them. They are still weak for the present.

One need not give others offence. One can perfectly well refrain from certain things. There is nothing wrong with that. Nor is it deceiving anyone. One takes account of others, for otherwise it could hinder the ministry.

1 Corinthians 8:11

And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? Such a verse is of course used to support the teaching that a believer can still perish, but it is not so simple. In evangelical jargon we use “perish” only in the absolute sense of the term, but that is not entirely biblical.

The intention is that a believer—who is therefore a child of God—should become a son of God. Perhaps by way of surplus: a son means an heir. A child cannot inherit and must therefore grow up into sonship so as later to receive the inheritance. That is God’s purpose. It may be that we have agreed that “perish” means one does not go to heaven but to hell, but in the Bible it by no means always has that meaning. Here it is applied to the practical life of the believer.

If salvation can refer to the spirit, to the soul, and to the body, then the opposite—perishing—can also refer to the spirit, to the soul, or to the body. Here it concerns the opposite of salvation of the soul. That has to do with the practical walk of life and the reward one will receive for it. Here it is the perishing of the soul, of the practical life of the believer. If it perishes, then it is of no use. Such a person also receives no reward (see 1 Corinthians 3). His works will be burned, but he himself will be saved. Of course as to the spirit, but not as to the soul.

Shall the weak brother perish through thy knowledge? That can indeed happen. Those who insist on holding to their own power, right, or liberty can damage others by it. If one thinks one cannot hinder the work of the Lord anyway and regards this as a kind of licence to do and leave undone whatever one pleases, then one is mistaken. That can indeed happen. We are only warned not to do it. We can resist, withstand.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit, or quench not the Spirit, which implies that it can be done. If you yourself do not want the Lord to work in you, then it does not happen. But you can also be a hindrance to the Lord’s work in others. God sometimes even removes believers. If someone stands in the way of the Lord’s work, gets under His feet, there is the risk that He will remove him—simply because he contributes nothing to His work anyway. If we resist Him, we run the risk that He will simply clear us out of the way. One should not be surprised at that. He is God and we are His property. He can do with us as He pleases. The Bible teaches that among believers many are weak and sickly, and some even sleep (have died), because the Lord has set them aside. Not on the ground

of any form of election, but simply because they get under His feet. That can indeed happen, and we are warned of it here.

1 Corinthians 8:12

But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

Although all things are lawful unto us, some things can nonetheless be considered sin, because they are wrong in themselves, because by them we cause others to stumble. One should be wiser.

1 Corinthians 8:13

Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

“Offend” = to trip up, to cause to fall.

One does it not because the meat has been offered to idols, but so as not to cause one’s brother to stumble. That is a different motivation.

Evidently these matters played a role in the church at Corinth. This whole chapter can be regarded as commentary on the fact that all things are lawful unto us, but not all things edify. That is repeated in 1 Corinthians 10, where these things come up again.

Paul’s rights and self-denial

1 Corinthians 9:1

Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

In this chapter Paul speaks of his own circumstances. The occasion for it is the strange behaviour of the Corinthians. The circumstances that seep through the words written here still exist today. That is probably also the reason why we have this kind of chapter in the Bible. Paul begins with some rhetorical questions. They are questions to which the answer is already obvious, but he compels his reader to give the answer himself. Verse 3 could just as well have stood at the top of the chapter, for this verse does not point forward to what follows but is the conclusion of what he has just said.

Paul is in fact giving account to those who are examining him. Once one grasps that, one also understands why he says:

Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

Even if in the eyes of others I am no apostle. The Corinthians are the result of his labour as an apostle. Paul’s apostleship is more or less proved by the existence of this church at Corinth. For that church arose from the missionary activity of the apostle himself.

Evidently some doubt had arisen among the Corinthians as to whether Paul was an apostle and could be regarded as a special servant of Christ.

In chapters 1 and 3 it had already been established that the Corinthians were divided and called themselves by the names of others who preached among them. One said: “I am of Apollos,” another: “I am of Paul,” another was of Cephas, and another of Christ. Evidently they had certain preferences for the persons in question. That is of course also a phenomenon one can hardly avoid. One simply has one’s preferences. One also has the idea that one explains things better than another. Apart from the content, the

manner of speaking of one teacher may appeal to one more than that of another. That is the positive way of approaching it, but there are also people who, when they can bring nothing against the content, say: "But that voice, that arrogant way of speaking! Not what he says, but how he says it."

From the second epistle to the Corinthians it appears that they did not find Paul charismatic enough. He was only a little man, also a bit of a hothead, not someone one puts on a platform or behind a lectern. Of course one can, but there are many people who may have no gift for teaching yet from whom one can learn a great deal. Be that as it may, they had something against Paul.

The Corinthians, however, had not only something against Paul personally, but certainly also against his teaching. They could not get round that, because it was completely scriptural. But that is how the adversary works. When nothing can be brought against the content, one attacks the man. There is always something to find fault with in someone to disqualify him by it. It is easy enough, after all. There were only twelve apostles; Paul was not among them, and so one is rid of him.

Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Is he not free to do what he did? That is, to preach the gospel and write letters to the Corinthians, if need be.

Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? This statement is usually taken as a confirmation of his apostleship, for traditionally—though it cannot be proved 100% from Scripture—apostles were sent directly by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, not by a church or anything of that kind. In that case they had seen the Lord Jesus. Paul uses this here as an argument for his apostleship. The Lord Himself had set him free. Think of the story of Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus. There he was set free and saw the Lord. It had been said in advance that he would be sent out and would go far to the Gentiles. In 1 Corinthians 15:8 he says that the Lord appeared to him last of all, as to one untimely born: And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. Paul does not adopt a modest tone here but defends his apostleship.

Are not ye my work in the Lord? If he were no apostle and had not been sent, he would never have been in Corinth, and there would have been no church in Corinth at all.

1 Corinthians 9:2

If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

Even if others do not regard me as an apostle, you at least do—for you are the proof of my apostleship.

It is not for nothing that Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:9–10: And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. That is his currency. He admits he does not amount to much, but just consider what the Lord nonetheless accomplishes through him.

This was his defence to those who were investigating him. He then goes into some details, for of course they had arguments why they did not want to take Paul seriously. In reality the Corinthians did not want to hear what Paul had to say at all. Much of what he preached he had received directly from the Lord Himself. This means he also spoke about what we call biblical truth in a different way and perhaps with greater authority.

The Twelve had received the teaching they preached from the Lord Jesus. It is not for nothing that the book of Acts opens with that. After the resurrection of the Lord Jesus they were still further instructed by Him. They too must be regarded as prophets, though we read nothing further about that. Paul, on the other hand, in his most thorough defence in 2 Corinthians 12, complains and says in restrained terms that he had been caught up to the third heaven, into the paradise of God, and that he had seen various things there and the Lord had revealed various things to him there. He complains because the Corinthians would not allow him to speak about it.

His message came even more directly than that of the other apostles from the risen Christ. He had heavenly revelations and heavenly visions. He had heard words that it is not lawful for a man to utter. One is inclined to say that the Lord did not permit him to speak about them, but that is a misunderstanding. It was the Corinthians who did not permit him to speak about them. That explains the strained relations between the Corinthians and Paul, and also his frustrations. Anyone who reads these two epistles comes to the conclusion that Paul felt hindered and frustrated because he could not deliver his message to these Corinthians. One of the methods of getting rid of him was to call his person, his conduct, and even his appearance into question. That happens here, and Paul goes into it—and this is also the real occasion for writing both epistles.

1 Corinthians 9:3

Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, 1 Corinthians 9:4 Have we not power to eat and to drink?

“Power” = right = legal authority. Do I not have the right to eat and to drink? Evidently he eats or drinks too much. The Lord Jesus had the same reproach. He said of it that when John the Baptist came fasting, people thought him demon-possessed, and then the Son of man comes eating and drinking, and that too is not right. There is always something to find fault with in someone. If one takes it more broadly, eating and drinking is someone’s life, but it is also literally seized upon as a reproach. One eats too much, another too little; one smokes too much, another too little. Paul says he has the right to eat and to drink.

1 Corinthians 9:5

Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?

Do I not have the right, if need be, to take a wife along—even though he travelled without a wife? He was after all a widower. A man without a wife is soon suspect. Even though he was unmarried, he naturally had the right to preach.

As well as other apostles. We know only of Peter that he was married, but evidently the others were too.

The brethren of the Lord = at any rate James and Jude.

Cephas = Peter.

Paul compares himself with them and says they were married. He was not. So what? One understands what lies behind it. This Paul does not belong. He is different and behaves differently. He does not belong to the Twelve, is not married, and moreover has something against marriage in general and more of that sort of thing.

1 Corinthians 9:6

Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

The wording is rather unfortunate. Paul and Barnabas provided for their own support while they were in Corinth. We know at any rate of Paul that he provided for his own support there. That is stated in Acts 18:2–3. He was a tentmaker. As Jews they were indeed instructed in the Torah and the Talmud, but alongside all that relatively theoretical study everyone was expected to learn a trade to provide for his own support. All that theoretical study brings in no money. It is also not productive. A trade is. Then something is produced that has value and can be paid for. All that spreading of knowledge puts no bread on the table. One should learn a trade to earn a living. Everything else is pastime and service and should therefore also be free. Those are at any rate the Jewish principles. The so-called great thinkers of the past were very often ordinary craftsmen.

Yet those travelling people do not have much time to be productive on the road. Moreover, what is one to do with someone who is a fisherman (Peter) and is sent on a missionary journey? Then one must just happen to come across a lake on the way and have a boat at one's disposal to catch fish. People who preach the gospel should be supported by collections, but Paul provided for his own support. On the sabbath he went to the synagogue and spoke there. During the week he worked. Then he was again reproached that he treated preaching as a hobby. He was a travelling tentmaker and besides that he preached. That of course does not amount to much. It was never right. Paul was not regarded as a full-timer and on that ground was not taken seriously. Nonetheless, Paul did indeed have the right not to practise a trade, for...

1 Corinthians 9:7

Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

What soldier must provide for his own support? In other words, whoever carries apples eats apples. It would have been entirely legitimate if Paul had lived from his preaching.

1 Corinthians 9:8

Say I these things after the manner of men? or saith not the law the same also? Have I thought of this myself, or does it also stand in the law, in the word of God?

“Law” = instruction. It stands in the Old Testament.

1 Corinthians 9:9

For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

The ox goes with the threshing sledge over the grain that must be threshed. If the ox gets hungry, he simply eats from what he is treading on. If the master does not want that, he puts a muzzle on the ox. The law, however, says thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn, after which the question is: Doth God take care for oxen? Since when does God take care for oxen? Since Deuteronomy 25:4 says thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. But Paul has another idea about it. God does not take care for oxen. The farmer must do that himself. But then why do such statements stand in the Bible?

1 Corinthians 9:10

Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

Such statements seem to have an agricultural application, but in reality they are simply about people. The idea is that if someone is active in a certain work, he should also eat from it. If the shipmaster carries apples in his ship, he eats an apple now and then. The general principle is that one lives from the work one does. Then follows that if we hold to biblical principles, the Lord will care for us again. So even if the shipmaster eats our apples that he is to transport for us, we shall certainly not be the worse for it.

That he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. There are different stages in the work, but in the end all workers are paid from the harvest. They live from the money their work brings in. Sometimes that is only after some time, but that is how it goes.

That principle is later also written to Timothy, for the intention is that he who serves as a soldier should not entangle himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2 Timothy 2:4). Others are there to see that the soldiers get food. The soldier himself is enlisted for the war.

And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully (2 Timothy 2:5). Even then there were rules one had to keep. Usually running is thought of. The first rule is that one starts together, and the other rule is of course that one stays within the lines of the course. If someone breaks the rules, he is disqualified. Then he no longer counts. Where one thinks the Christian life must be managed, that is completely contrary to biblical rules. All that striving brings only disqualification with it. Simple as that. One does not keep to biblical principles. Paul later applies this contest to himself. In any case, Paul and Barnabas, like the others, naturally had the right not to work and to live from the preaching of the gospel. That is even in accordance with lawful principles.

1 Corinthians 9:11

If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?

Sowing the word of God. The Corinthians were after all God's husbandry and Paul the sower. Is it not perfectly normal that if I have preached the gospel to you and sown the word of God in you, you should recompense me in carnal things? He could perfectly well have asked for payment for his labour among them, but he did not.

1 Corinthians 9:12

If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

This power = this right. Of course we have the right to ask for some contribution, but we have not done so. One need not make use of one's rights. One need not demand rights. If under the law one already has rights, does that mean one must make use of them? If one sees that someone has committed an offence, one need not accuse him. But if one does, then one must also be prepared to act as executioner, under the motto: "He that

is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone.” One need not do that. One can also simply let it be.

Think for example of Joseph, whose betrothed was suddenly found to be with child. He then thought of simply departing with the dawn. He could also have brought an accusation against her. That would have brought the death penalty. That would have been his right, but he made no use of it. He was planning the opposite—to let it be and to depart himself. The Lord stopped him.

One need not bring an accusation, but if one does, then one must bear the consequences of it. So one may have a right to a salary, but that does not mean one must demand that right.

Why do ye not rather suffer wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? It was not Paul’s intention to become rich, but to preach the word as intensively as possible. To put no hindrance in the way of that he simply did it free of charge. He only needed to stay alive and remain able to do his work. He could provide for that himself. He had time enough for it. Paul wanted to give no hindrance to the preaching of the gospel. Such a hindrance could have been that he asked for money for his preaching.

1 Corinthians 9:13

Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

One wonders where the Corinthians got their knowledge of the Old Testament from, for there were probably not so many Jews there.

In Hebrews 13 it is called eating of the altar. People brought offerings to the Lord. In practice those offerings were brought by the priests. That was their occupation, or at any rate an important part of their occupation. What came on the altar was for the Lord, but part of it was taken off again and came onto the priests’ own table.

What it pictures is that those who serve the Lord should also live from it. The Lord therefore cares for them. That applies not only to the apostles or to those charged with the proclamation of the word, but to every child of God. Where our priority in life is to serve the Lord, there He will care for us. That is why we are all expected to eat of the altar.

Once one realises that, one also understands that in this world it makes little sense to chase after riches, for we are dependent on the Lord. If He thinks it is well so, then He will see to it that we do not acquire that riches anyway. If He thinks it is not good for us to be poor, then He will see to it that we never become poor anyway. These things are not only about Paul, but he tells them so that the Corinthians themselves might take example from it—and he says that regularly.

We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle (Hebrews 13:10). Those who serve the tabernacle are, according to the context, those who place themselves under the dominion of the law. But we who place ourselves under the leadership of the High Priest of the new covenant eat of the altar. We have become priests of the New Covenant. We have a ministry to the Lord. The altar is a figure of that, and from it we eat. In that circumstance the Lord provides for us, which is not the case when we place ourselves under the law. The Lord has nothing to do with that. By that one does not serve Him either.

1 Corinthians 9:14

Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

The Lord has instituted that ordinance for the benefit of those who proclaim the glad tidings. God has given them the right to live from it in practice as well, and thus potentially to derive income from it. Whether they actually make use of that right is another question. At any rate, they need not feel burdened about it.

1 Corinthians 9:15

But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

This is not a belated request for them to make a contribution. He would much prefer to keep it as it is.

1 Corinthians 9:16

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

Here he explains why he preaches the gospel. It is certainly not to make a living from it. Necessity is laid upon him. It is his responsibility. It is the gift given to him. The responsibility he has received is his gift. To him was given the grace to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, or the manifold wisdom of God. He simply must do it, and woe to him if he does not. “Woe” does not mean he regards it as a heavy burden he dreads, or something he resents. It has simply been laid upon him, and so he does it. Necessity is laid upon him. He is a driven man. It comes from within. The love of Christ constrains him. For him, to live is Christ. He preaches the gospel anyway, and thank God he cannot be managed either.

1 Corinthians 9:17

For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

This stewardship has been entrusted to him. He must do it anyway, and he will also receive reward for it. One may safely conclude that he does not do it unwillingly, for that is not the normal course of things. The normal course is that he who desires the office of overseer desires a good work (1 Timothy 3:1), and he carries it out with a ready mind (1 Peter 5:2). From within, driven.

The curse of our society—certainly in the Netherlands—is that drivenness is killed off. Everything must be done neatly according to the rules and the collective labour agreement, according to working hours regulations and so on. Everything is regulated from above, to protect the stupid people. You cannot just do something. It may be allowed, but then it is to earn money by it, or to get the viewing figures, or to become the fastest-growing church in the Netherlands. Utterly ridiculous things. That is not what it is about. It is about being able to fill your life, your time, your hands with the things you would most like to do. To give actual hands and feet—literally—to what comes from within. That is what the Preacher teaches, and it applies to every creature. Then you are a happy person. What others think of it has nothing to do with it. Others have no say in it and have no business interfering.

That applies equally to the office of elder. We have become masters at suppressing such things. It is about being able to live as you wish: free. That is, doing what you want. Our will as believers is of course primarily determined and formed by the word of God. That does not take away our liberty—on the contrary. It shapes our being, our mind, and thereby our will. For it is God who works in us both to will and to do. When we find opportunity to give expression to that in our lives, then we are happy people. That is all there is, says the Preacher. Well, there is something more, for we shall receive reward for it. In short, whether I do it willingly or not, that responsibility has been entrusted to me, and if I do it willingly, I have a reward. Not here—for here only the costs of livelihood are necessary, so that we have the opportunity to do what we should do. By biblical standards that reward happily lies on the other side, for it is an abiding reward, an incorruptible crown. That is better to have than becoming rich here

1 Corinthians 9:18

What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:19

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

Since Paul received no allowance from the Corinthians, he therefore owed them no account. He could do as he pleased. Otherwise it might have been: “Whose bread one eats, his word one speaks.” If a preacher places himself in the service of a local church and allows himself to be paid by it, then it is normal that that local church tells him what to do and not do—and therefore also what to say and not say. Logically so. He is paid for it. If you are in paid employment, you must dance a little to the tune of your bread-masters. To a lesser degree this applies to people who preach the word and are paid for it, even if they are not in paid employment. Payment creates a certain relationship. It brings certain moral obligations and easily clouds the relations. The phenomenon that the preaching of the word of God steadily declines and knowledge of the Bible continually diminishes is caused by the fact that those who must preach that word are indeed in paid employment. Thereby limitations are imposed upon them. Those people are dependent on financial contributions. In some cases it seems wiser to them not to say certain things, because it has financial consequences. Happily there have always been people who paid no attention to such things and said: “Yes, but lads, this stands in the Bible.” Often at risk to their own lives.

One had best stay as far as possible from such economic relations.

Paul at any rate did so in order to be free—to be able to preach what he wanted to preach and what he also had to preach. He made himself servant to all, that he might gain the more—but also that more believers might actually live from faith. It is not only coming to faith that matters, but also the growth of believers. For that teaching in the word of God is needed. For that purpose he not only refrained from financial contributions, for...

1 Corinthians 9:20

And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

He adapted himself on occasion in order to preach the gospel to them. When he picked up Timothy somewhere on the way, he immediately circumcised him for the sake of the Jews there, because Timothy had a Greek father (Acts 16:3). So for the Jews everything was in order. The man was now circumcised. For the Lord, of course, it made no difference. Paul therefore adapts himself on occasion—and evidently Timothy too. That is a matter of weighing and personal responsibility of the believer. Those things are not regulated, but they do connect with chapter 8, the matter of meat offered to idols. If people stumble over that, then we accommodate them.

So, for example, you can perfectly well go to some Indian tribe in South America, but the first thing you must learn is to eat with those people. Your body does not tolerate it at first, but you must get used to it—for if you want to reach those people, you must not present yourself as an outsider who comes from a civilised and rich country to bring them the gospel from on high. You must be among those people (this is historical, by the way). There are also people who lived among criminals and became half-criminal themselves. Brother Jan Kits said of that, that if there is a drowning man in the water and you jump in too, so that you both drown, that is not the intention. You throw a lifebelt to a drowning man. There are limits. You want those people to come out of a certain position, and so you must not throw yourself in with them. That also gives the wrong impression.

It is therefore a weighing that you must make yourself, and Paul became to the Jews as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews; and...

1 Corinthians 9:21

To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

It is not forbidden to direct oneself to the law, so long as one does not think it contributes anything to salvation, for it does not.

To those without law he became as without law. That was of course the case with the Gentiles. That can hardly have been difficult for him in those days, for he was learning that we are no longer under the law and that Jews must be saved in the same way as Gentiles. He adapted himself to the circumstances.

Lest one think that Paul knew no instruction, no law or ethics, he says in a parenthesis: (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ).

The translation is rather unfortunate, for it now seems as though he yet lived under the law of Moses.

Here are a few other translations:

- Luther translation: ...although I am not without law before God, but under the law of Christ...
- Good News Translation
In the same way, when working with Gentiles, I live like a Gentile, outside the Jewish Law, in order to win Gentiles. This does not mean that I don't obey God's law; I am really under Christ's law.
- International Standard Version
To those who do not have the Law, I became like a man who does not have the Law in order to win those who do not have the Law. However, I am not free from God's Law, but I'm subject to the Messiah's law. ...

He does use the word “law,” but not in the sense of the Mosaic law, but in the sense of James: “the perfect law of liberty,” or John: “We should keep His commandments.” Those are not the ten commandments or the Mosaic commandments, but the teachings, the law, the instructions of Christ Himself.

1 Corinthians 9:22

To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

“Weak” perhaps refers back to everything that has gone before, but more likely it speaks of what Romans 14 concerns, where it says we should receive the weak in faith and even draw them to ourselves for the Lord’s work. Otherwise it simply refers back to 1 Corinthians 8, to the matter of meat offered to idols. There are after all those who are weak, or at least have a weak conscience, to whom one should adapt oneself to some extent. Sometimes one refrains from certain things so as not to give any hindrance to the gospel of Christ. Once again, it is for each one a personal responsibility.

Paul at any rate adapted himself to everyone, with but one aim: that he might by all means save some.

“By all means” = eventually. That he might eventually save some.

“Some” — Paul does not assume he must convert the world, or that he had a calling to some city or region. It is always about some. He says that for example in Romans 11 with regard to the Jews: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them (Romans 11:14). In our dispensation it is always about individuals, however many they may be. It is never about the collective, never about the world, but about the gathering out of all nations of a people for His name. That comes out emphatically here too.

1 Corinthians 9:23

And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

I do this for the gospel’s sake — it appears the Corinthians had objections to that strange behaviour of Paul, including his adapting himself. One can easily interpret that as untrustworthy and unprincipled, but here he gives account and says he does it for no other reason than this—for the gospel’s sake.

That I might be partaker thereof with you — together with those he might win for Christ. It concerns the unity of the church, of course. That he might have part with those weak ones, with those under the law, with those without law, in that one church.

1 Corinthians 9:24

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

The contest in war from verse 7 now changes into a sporting contest

“Run” — in the KJV it always means “race,” even when a ship “runs.” Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis (Acts 16:11). Samothrace is an island in the Aegean Sea. They therefore sailed there, but Paul calls that running, meaning they sailed there at speed.

If you run in a race, run so as if there is only one prize to be won. Of course it is not that there is only one prize, but you should run as though that were so. You need not think you will get the main prize, for there are already so many before us who may perhaps lay

claim to it. Nonetheless, it is Paul's exhortation to run so. That is also sporting. You run for yourself and actually against yourself. Every sportsman knows that. You are in fact fighting against yourself to deliver the best possible performance.

1 Corinthians 9:25

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

Everyone who strives for that mastery restrains himself in all things. Let us lay aside every weight that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1). That is running the race with full commitment. That involves restrictions. If you want to do one thing, you cannot do the other. You must therefore choose. Those are the difficult things in life. People who cannot choose sooner or later end up in care, so that carers can choose for them. People who are at odds with their lives and make a mess of them are often people who could not choose. You must learn that. As a child you do not do that, for then your parents do it for you, but when you are adult, then you are, so that you can make your own choices. That must be so. If you go right, you cannot go left. Perhaps later again, but not at the same time. You must therefore lay aside things.

In sport the prize is a laurel wreath (at least that has been so through the centuries). That is a corruptible crown. Those are leaves that fall off by themselves. But we run that race so that we may receive an incorruptible crown. That is that incorruptible treasure, or the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us (1 Peter 1:4). That prize is therefore certainly worth the effort. We hope for that prize, for He hath begotten us again unto a lively hope. The condition is of course that you run that race.

1 Peter 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

1 Peter 1:4

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

Begotten again unto = begotten again with a purpose.

That purpose is the lively hope.

The lively hope = the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. That is obviously the ultimate goal. To that we have been begotten again.

To what was the Lord Jesus begotten? One may say: to be able to die, but with death everything normally stops. That therefore cannot be the ultimate goal. He was begotten so that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man and that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and that we might receive the adoption of sons (Hebrews 2:9–15).

Birth is not the ultimate goal; even life itself is not the ultimate goal. It concerns the result of it. Otherwise life would have no meaning. The Preacher says life in itself has no meaning. That meaning does exist, but then in Christ. We live ultimately to inherit. That is what we hope for.

That is called a lively hope, because that hope is meant to soften all our suffering. We do not have hope for eternal life, for we already possess that. In that respect we have at

most still hope for our coming redemption—namely the redemption of our body—but in fact we have hope for the inheritance reserved for us in heaven. If all is well, that hope determines our life now. That hope is decisive for our motives. We run a race, and at the end of it an incorruptible crown awaits us. Those promises therefore determine our life. We no longer live under the law, yet we do live under discipline—under the better and perfect law, which is the law of liberty. That is the law, the instruction, that sets before us that we are children of God but on the way to our adoption as sons. One should allow oneself to be trained, endure chastening, and run the race in the manner described in Scripture. The intention is that we should restrain ourselves in quite a number of matters. That sounds suspiciously legalistic. And so it is—only it is not the Mosaic law. Moreover, it is not obligatory. You are a child of God, but you have no obligations. If, however, you wish to be placed as a son of God, then it is certainly the intention that you run that race. In it there are rules to which you must hold. It is not required, but if you wish to reach your goal, it is strongly advisable. After all, you wish one day to receive that inheritance. On the other hand, we are His property. It is therefore entirely natural that you serve Him and run the race He has set before you. That you also receive reward for it is a welcome bonus.

The distinction between child and son has been lost. You are a child of God, but the intention is that you become a son of God. Son = heir. You become a child of God without it costing you anything, but to become a son of God costs you quite a lot. Yet that fades into nothing compared with what we shall receive. It is not about coming to faith, but about coming to surrender. That you give your whole being and possession to Him. That is only right, for He has bought you at a great price. We give our lives to Him. What He gave us we offer back to Him. That is what that life is for as well—that we in Him might glorify the Father.

When the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, He offered Himself—namely His body. That offering was accepted, and God appointed Him with the words: Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee and also with the words: Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

We have received His life, and now the intention is that we actually live that life. That is also the background of such a disputed verse as: Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. People like to get round that. They believe one is not saved by works, but then what is one to do with it? This of course does not concern new birth but the reward that awaits us and therefore the salvation of the soul, the prize of the high calling of God which is in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.). The Lord sets us to work and also grants us the strength to do that work. For that we receive reward. Those are the better promises of God.

Wherefore receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls (James 1:21).

One can only be saved as to the spirit by faith and without works, but one cannot be saved as to the soul by faith without works. The one must be without works and the other must be with works. Those are of course not the works of the law but the works God has prepared beforehand, the works of faith.

Paul runs his race and preaches the gospel so that he might be partaker thereof with them—implying that it is not only about new birth but also about what follows, namely receiving reward. 1 Corinthians 9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

We should run the race with patience. Passionately, with full commitment.

1 Corinthians 9:25

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

If you must run as hard as possible, you must take as little as possible with you. We can take example from top athletes, who set everything aside solely to perform as well as possible. They receive for it a corruptible crown, but we, if we run our race so, an incorruptible one.

1 Corinthians 9:26

I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: He does not just potter about, though the Corinthians probably thought that. That he just messed about. As regards his service to the Lord he lives as a top athlete. He does not run uncertainly, waiting to see how the Lord leads his life. He does not belong to those who say it will come as it must come. If it is to be so, it will come, and if it is not to be so, it will not come. That is oriental fatalism. That is laziness, slackness, lack of commitment and ambition, lack of patience and drivenness. They do not believe in chance. It is all led so. Those things have found entrance into Christianity. They are presented to us with a pious story, but they are always excuses for not having to bear responsibility, for being able to drift slackly through life. It goes as it goes, and the Lord gets the blame for it. When things go well one cries that it is all grace. But of course it is all grace. He gives us grace to run a race. If you wish to run with Him—very well—but then you must first be born again. Then the Lord gives you new life and it can begin. Here is the starting line, and it is in that direction. Run! 1 Corinthians 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

The body is an instrument, a tool. Verse 27 is the explanation of verse 23—so that he might be partaker of the gospel with them. That applies to all believers. We run such a race. The Lord has set that race before each of us, and we should be faithful to Him. The word planted in us is able to save our souls. Where we allow ourselves to be taught by that word, there that word will motivate us to run the race. That word will awaken love for the Lord in us, so that we are driven and motivated from within.

Motivate = move.

Then we shall be set in motion to live for the Lord. In practice that always means that life will have a function in the spreading of the word of God, at whatever level. For the spreading of the word is the responsibility of the church and therefore also of individual believers. Whatever the Lord does and whatever His work consists in, He does His work through His word and therefore our race always has in some way to do with that word.

Often indirectly, but sometimes directly.

It may be that you teach others biblical truth and yet pay no attention to it yourself. Conversely, even if the preacher who proclaims the gospel to us pays no attention to it, that is still not our concern. We have to do not with the preacher but with the Lord Himself. For it is after all about His word—if it is indeed that. Therefore we should search the Scriptures to see whether these things are so.

Our responsibility is that we should run this race that the Lord has given to each of us. That is dealt with at length in chapters 12–14.

Israel as a warning example

It should be clear that the example of Israel is not to be followed. Sometimes one must learn how not to do it so that one naturally retains how it should be done.

The idea is that Israel was born out of the waters of the Red Sea and began a race. That race consisted of walking through the wilderness for forty years in forty-two stages. They had been delivered from Egypt and were on their way to the promised land. In hindsight that is a picture of the position of the church. The church too is a redeemed people.

Before the word is to be preached, it is first said: "I am the God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." So the church too has been brought out of the house of bondage (the law). We have been delivered from making bricks ourselves, from wood, hay, and stubble. We are a redeemed people and have gone forth to Christ outside the camp. Since then we are in the wilderness and on our way to the promised land. In that we should not long to return to the fleshpots of Egypt. We should not look back at all. Especially not if you have been brought out of Sodom—but on second thought the difference between Sodom and Egypt is not so great. Jerusalem is even called by both names at once (Revelation 11:8). That is not our world. We do one thing: we press toward and fix our gaze on that inheritance, the promised land and all that belongs to it.

The bad example of Israel is that on the way they always had criticism of God, that God did not do His work properly. They murmured. In the church too people have a habit of that. For example, the Lord said He would build His church, but apparently He does not, and so we must do it. Or He does it wrongly. We have other ideas about it—modern ideas. That is Israel's position: always murmuring and always forgetting what the Lord did in the past, how He cared for them. They simply did not trust the Lord. They had their own ideas about how to get through the wilderness instead of looking to God's promises. He had set a race before them, but they did not wish to run it. Most of them therefore perished in the wilderness through unbelief.

The race is mentioned quite often in Scripture.

Galatians 5:7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

You once ran well. Who has prevented you from obeying the truth? Why do you no longer run well?

What was wrong with the way the Galatians ran? They were no longer obedient to the truth. They did not want to know the truth. They were the inventors of covenant theology. Of course dates are attached to it, but one does not look far enough back. The philosophy that man needs a law because otherwise he does not know how to live does not come from Calvin. We therefore cannot do without law, and if it stands somewhere in the Bible, it cannot have been meant that way. The compromise is then that we are delivered from part of the law—that part we also found very troublesome. The other part, which we thought we needed, we are not delivered from. That is the difference between ceremonial and moral laws.

We need not keep the law in the sense that we need not bring offerings and therefore need not give tithes. We need not celebrate a Day of Atonement, need not build a temple—for who can pay for that? We are delivered from that. That is a yoke that neither we nor our fathers were able to bear. The other part, however—the ten

commandments—we must keep, for man cannot do without those instructions, it is thought.

In politics that is the difference between left and right. The left thinks there must be a strong government to lead the people. Government must therefore give directions how it should be, otherwise it becomes a mess. Things must be regulated from above. The right says precisely that all that regulation from above only makes people unhappy. It takes away personal liberty and privacy. Man must have norms and values from which he lives. The left is law and the right is grace.

Must one then have no government? Yes, but we under grace have a Government. That is the Lord Himself. We live under Him. We should serve Him, and He by His Spirit would do a work in us and lead us to our adoption as sons.

That such a philosophy was once worked out in what is called covenant theology may be so, but it is simply the mixing of left and right so that one retains neither. It is a bit of everything. Opposing concepts muddled together, but if you cannot keep right and left apart, then traffic rules are useless. If you no longer know the difference between law and grace because you have muddled them together, then you have a problem. You want grace but cannot let go of the law. You want to go right but left pulls. You want to come out of Egypt, but once out you immediately want to go back. Back to slavery. At least there we had food. If only we had a strong government that arranged everything for us, then we should be free of personal responsibility. In countries where that is indeed arranged we then say the people are oppressed. It is never right, and you never get out of it.

We as children of God are delivered from the slavery of the law and placed in liberty. We have been brought out of Egypt (the world). That land has moreover been judged by God. The world lives under God's curse. We have been led out of it and should live in obedience to the truth. Not to the Mosaic law but to the truth. The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, while the law is a ministration of death.

Ye did run well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? They were no longer obedient to the truth and therefore no longer ran well. What then is the truth?

Galatians 5:1

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

That was the yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.

Galatians 5:2

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

If you allow yourselves to be brought under the law. These Galatians were regenerate people. They were children of God. Paul is writing to children of God, telling them that if you place yourselves under the law, Christ will profit you nothing. But what profit could Christ possibly have for someone who is already born again and has already received eternal life? That He would bring us to that inheritance. He would accomplish His work in us and through us, and by His Spirit lead us to our adoption as sons. But if you cling to the law, you are in bondage, and the slave will not inherit—as was explained just a few verses earlier. Then you are like Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, and you will not inherit.

Galatians 5:4

Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Then grace has become an empty concept. Have you noticed that the word “Christ” is hardly used any more? Not so very long ago there was the Jesus Movement. Jesus this and Jesus that. Say it a few times and it immediately sounds like a curse. Nowadays you hardly hear that name. Nowadays everyone talks about God this and God that. There is also a category that writes “G-d” because they do not want to pronounce or even write that word. They all have their reasons, but you no longer hear those names. They no longer know the Lord Jesus Christ. When they speak of God they may mean the Lord Jesus Christ. That may be, but if that Name is not on the lips, it usually means that Name plays no role in the thoughts either and therefore has no meaning any more. But under heaven there is no other name given whereby we must be saved. Why? Because Jesus is the Christ. Because He is that, and because we believe in Him, He is our Lord, and therefore we say: the Lord Jesus Christ.

That Name is no longer heard because Christ has become of no effect to them, because Christ profits them nothing. Because people place themselves either under the traditional law or under the law that has been developed recently. They call that management. The rules, the statutes, church discipline, and so on. And if we must be educated and disciplined by the church, then the Lord need not do it. One could also say that because the Lord does not do it, the church thinks it must do it—or because the Lord does not do it well enough, people think they must stand in His place. That is why there are so many antichrists who place themselves in the Lord’s stead.

The Lord does His work in His own way, and He does it through His word. The only thing necessary, the Lord Himself said, is that we sit at His feet and let ourselves be taught by Him. After that we should trust in the power of His word and its effect—not only in the heart but also in the life of the believer. The word must be emphasised because we tend to explain it away. Because man tends to say it concerns philosophies and opinions and is therefore detached from daily life. That word should have its effect in our life. That word is not only for Sunday but for our whole life, day in and day out. That word should form us. As a child one already learns that one must open all the doors of one’s heart so that the Lord Jesus may have access there. So it is in our whole life. We should give the Lord that room.

Poor Abraham, the father of all believers! He had no law. How sad. If it is true that man needs a law, that that law is a blessing for man in general and for the elect in particular, and that one can rejoice in the law of God, how sad then for poor Abraham, the great example for all believers (except Christ). The man had no law. Not for another 430 years. By then he had unfortunately already died a natural death.

Evidently he could manage without the law. Paul says that the law, which came 430 years later, had nothing whatever to do with it. A man is justified by faith, without the law. Abraham served the Lord all his life, but without law. What was necessary was that he listened to the word of the Lord. The law is an activation of the flesh. What you need is to stand in liberty and listen to the word of truth. God likes to use motivated staff. Not people who stick to the rules. Those are by definition not mature. Adults are adults because they can make their own decisions, bear responsibility, and also want to bear responsibility when things go wrong. God wants to make adults of us and therefore also lets us make our mistakes. That is the quickest way to learn something.

In short, one runs well when one is obedient to the truth. The specific truth in the epistle to the Galatians is that the believer stands in liberty. That he lives by faith and is led by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:18

But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

It is either one or the other. The Spirit leads us into all truth and leads us to our adoption as sons. The race is not a race of law but of faith. It is the effect of the power of the word of God, which we receive with meekness into our hearts.

Philippians 2:16

Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

The living word, but also the word that gives life. That is the truth from Galatians 5. Paul says that if these Philippians work out their salvation with fear and trembling, then he has not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. It all has to do with the word of life. When we hold forth the word of life and fix our attention on it, then we shall be blameless and harmless (verse 15). Then we shall be as children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. We should shine among them as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.

Philippians 3:13

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended:

This does not concern eternal life, for he has of course already apprehended that.

Philippians 3:14

But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

But one thing is needful. He presses toward the goal, toward the prize of the high calling of God. We should receive honour from God, receive reward, the recompense of the inheritance. So one should walk. That is according to this rule, and so one should be a follower of Paul. The final result expresses itself among other things in the change of our body.

Philippians 3:21

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

That body can be naked, clothed, or clothed upon, depending on our lived life here. The inheritance we shall receive expresses itself in our appearance, in our body.

Philippians 3:12

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Colossians 2:10

And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

That seems contradictory. Not perfect and yet perfect. Here too it is the difference between salvation as to the soul and salvation as to the spirit. We are perfect in the sense that we have become children of God. That life is in itself perfect. It contains everything pertaining to life and godliness. In Philippians 3:12, however, it concerns the effect of that in our practical walk and therefore in our service to Him.

Forgetting those things which are behind — he not only forgets his whole Jewish background; he counts it even as loss and dung. In the list of those things he speaks exclusively of religious matters that he has left behind. He has been delivered from them, and that is what he forgets. Now he presses toward the goal the Lord has set before him. We should be followers of him together.

2 Timothy 4:6

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

2 Timothy 4:7

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; His biblical race is here more or less at an end. After that he thinks of going on a journey. He thinks he will still need his books, which someone else must bring him. He therefore expects to be released from prison and to go on missionary journeys again—but that is outside the pages of the Bible.

I have fought a good fight;

I have finished my course;

I have kept the faith.

That is three times the same thing. He has fought the good fight of faith. The essence of a believer's life is of course that he lives by faith. For the just shall live by faith. It does not say that the unbeliever shall receive life by faith. We then, being justified by faith, should therefore also live by faith. It begins with accepting the word of God and thereby accepting the Lord Jesus Christ, and then we go through life with Him. We let ourselves be taught by the word and feed on the word of life. That word should be planted in us, which also means it should grow up in us and save our souls.

Hebrews 10:38

Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

Hebrews 10:39

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

What James calls the salvation of the soul is here called the saving of the soul, but it is obviously exactly the same. We are believers and are therefore born again. Our spirit is saved, but how it stands with our soul—in the biblical sense of the term—is what should flow from that new birth. For that the same thing is still needed—namely receiving the word of God. Faith, therefore. God does all His work through His word. He does that to the natural man in such a way that through that word he comes to faith, and the regenerate man grows up through that same word, with the intention that he may later be placed as a son.

Besides that we also have the redemption of the body.

Philippians 3:20

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Philippians 3:21

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. Our citizenship (conversation) is in heaven, from which we also look for the Saviour. He will change our humiliated body. We have after all humbled ourselves under the mighty

hand of God. We look for the Saviour who will complete His work in us, so that we may also be saved as to soul and body and be conformed to His body.

So, salvation—first as to the spirit, then as to the soul, and lastly as to the body—as the result of the life here on earth.

The incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance is called in Hebrews 10:34 a better and enduring substance in the heavens. In verse 35 it is called a great recompence of reward, obtained through boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, or boldness to come to the throne of grace. We should not cast away that boldness, because for that boldness we shall receive a great recompence of reward. When we come to the throne, we do so to serve Him who sits on the throne and to submit ourselves to Him.

Hebrews 10:36

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

We do that will of God with patience—with passion, with surrender.

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). When we have done that will of God, we shall receive the promise—that which was promised. What was promised? A better and enduring substance in heaven, or a great recompence of reward from the preceding verses. Or the inheritance Peter spoke of, or the adoption as sons that Romans 8 speaks of.

Hebrews 10:39

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

- A better and enduring substance in the heavens;
- A great recompence of reward;
- The promise;
- The saving of the soul.

Four different expressions for the inheritance laid up for us in heaven. We do not draw back from the throne of grace but draw near to it. We do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together in verse 25, nor cast away our confidence. We shall receive reward for that.

In Hebrews 11 it is set forth that the essence has always been to listen to the word of God and draw the logical consequences from it.

In this chapter all those heroes of faith pass by. What it concerns is not that they worked so hard, but that they were faithful to the word of God. They simply did what the Lord said. The Lord said to Noah that it would rain in 120 years and he must build a boat for the occasion. He received instructions for the building, and by faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house (Hebrews 11:7). You simply listen to the Lord and draw the consequence from His words. He did not tell us to build such a boat; He gave us a pound and said: “Occupy till I come.” Then it is not the intention that you sit somewhere with your pound and wait for what is coming, because things will come as they come and we shall see how the Lord leads us. Those are indeed biblical concepts and they sound especially pious and humble, but it is not so humble; it is indifferent. Humble means one submits oneself to the Lord and occupies as He has asked. Not that you report to Him every so often for a work meeting, or are away for a week and come back for a new assignment. No—occupy till He comes. He has still not returned, so we simply carry on.

The Lord has something different for each one to do. Abraham did not have to build a boat either. He had to leave his country and his kindred and go to a land the Lord would show him. He did that, even though he did not know where he would come. It is different for everyone.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. When the story of Moses is told, it is often told differently from how it stands here in Hebrews. Also differently from Acts 7, as Stephen describes it in his speech. People think Moses became angry and in his rage killed an Egyptian, so that he unfortunately had to flee. The Bible teaches that Moses consciously presented himself to his people to present himself as the deliverer, for God had called Moses to that. Moses did not protest but chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. It turned out differently from what he thought. He supposed they would recognise him as the deliverer, but the people were unbelieving. Later he was called again, but then he asked God whether He could not send someone else for him, for he was slow of speech. But whatever excuses he had, the Lord said: "No, I have chosen you. You do it." And he did it, even though he had no confidence in himself. He had therefore to trust the Lord. So it went. It is different for everyone. The essence is always faith, trust in the Lord.

Hebrews 12:1

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us;

A whole series of people is set before us. They are called a cloud of witnesses. A cloud stands for spiritual things. That is why the pillar of cloud is also a figure of the Holy Spirit.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us;

We have these examples. Look at how they acted and how the Lord dealt with them.

Take example from that and lay aside everything that is wrong in your life.

The sin which doth so easily beset us = the sin that perhaps besets us. In so far as that sin and that weight are present.

Lay aside = no longer look back at it. Put it away. When Satan points to my guilt, I say: "It is all nailed to the cross."

If we had come to this point from the preceding chapters of Hebrews 11, the question might have been: which sin should we lay aside? Then it should long since have been clear that it concerns the sin of unbelief.

Let us run with full surrender the race that is set before us. We do not choose that race ourselves; the Lord has set it before us.

Hebrews 12:2

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Looking unto Jesus... In Philippians 3:14 Paul said we should press toward the mark, the prize of the high calling of God. Here it is even more fundamental: that we should look to the Author and Finisher of faith.

Author = archēgos = the One who goes before.

Finisher of our faith = the Lord Jesus ran that race on earth and finished it. We have not yet, for we are still engaged in it. He was the First who finished that race.

Hebrews 12:2

...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Joy is also set before us. We too should therefore despise the shame that falls to our lot. We should go forth to Him, bearing His reproach. The result of His race is that He is set down at the right hand of God.

Sitting and resting are the same word. "Sit at my right hand" is the same as "rest at my right hand." When Genesis says the Lord rested on the seventh day from His work, they might just as well have translated: He sat down on the seventh day. In chapter 4 it says He entered into rest. In His resurrection God says to Him: "Sit at my right hand." It is the end of the race and therefore "sitting."

We run the race, looking to Jesus. Why?

He ran His race and was highly exalted. We who have part in Him and moreover are His followers await exactly the same. We shall share with Him in His glory. That is not merely a conclusion, but it is explicitly stated elsewhere. We have died, been buried, and risen with Christ. We have been seated with Him in the heavenlies and shall be manifested with Him in glory. He shall bring many sons to glory and be the Firstborn among many brethren. We shall be where He is. That is the thrust of verse 2. We see that God fulfils His promises and see what that entails.

Hebrews 12:3

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

The sin of sinners consisted in contradiction. Now you also know which sin is mentioned in verse 1. In the preceding chapters that had already been spoken of. In chapter 3 Israel is taken as an example. And we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief, because of their sin—namely because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:17–19). That is the sin par excellence. Let us lay that aside and live by faith. The world and the natural man contradict. The world holds the truth in unrighteousness. Those are the contradictors with their falsely so-called science. We should not do that but take example from the Lord Jesus, who endured these things unto blood, striving against the sin of unbelief. We should consider that it is precisely in that contradiction and through that contradiction that we are built up in faith. Thus we are chastened, so that we may later be placed as sons.

Hebrews 12:12

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

Hebrews 12:13

And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Occupy till He comes. Run the race. Make straight paths for your feet = we should not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, but simply remain faithful to the word of God.

After Paul has set himself as an example in chapter 9, he takes Israel and her history as an example in chapter 10.

1 Corinthians 10:1

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

The little word “moreover” connects what now follows with what has gone before. In what has gone before we had the example of Paul, and now follows the negative example of Israel, with the intention that we should not fall into the same example of unbelief.

1 Corinthians 10:2 -4

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

The fathers were all:

- under the cloud;
- passed through the sea;
- baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;
- all drank the same spiritual drink from the Rock, which is Christ.

It concerns “all.” The contrast comes in the next verse.

1 Corinthians 10:5

But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

If we search it out, it turns out that God had pleasure in only two persons—namely Joshua and Caleb. They were the only two of all who were brought out of Egypt who actually entered Canaan.

This is therefore certainly no example to rejoice in, for it means that apparently only a few can rejoice in the Lord’s pleasure and the majority cannot. Perhaps we should not make that calculation at all. The intention is that the Lord should have pleasure in me, and as for the others...?

In the first four verses the unity of Israel is pointed out. The whole people obeyed Moses. The people of Israel at first consisted only of those who obeyed Moses. If they did not follow him, they were not under the cloud and had not passed through the sea either. It concerns a unity. That one people submitted to the authority of Moses and to the Lord. They are here called “all.”

That unity is also strengthened in the expression of verse 2, that all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. That all were baptized in the sea suggests that all became very wet, but that is precisely not the case.

“Baptized” = becoming one. When applied in practice, a person or object is wholly or partly immersed in a liquid.

Baptō = immersion;

Baptizō = immersion, but then from within and from without and thus saturated with.

That this happens by immersion is clear, but not everything that is immersed is also saturated. Think of a sponge that takes the water completely into itself. The sponge has then become one with the water.

When baptizing with a liquid, we translate it as immerse or saturate with. 1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. That has nothing to do with a liquid, except that the Spirit spoken of is on occasion presented as though it were a liquid. That is figurative language, of course. So the verse ends: We have been all made to drink into one Spirit. This means we have to do with the Spirit not only outwardly but also inwardly. We are saturated with it. That can be, because the Spirit is presented as water, oil, or wine.

Baptism is therefore becoming one with.

So the Israelites became one with Moses and thereby also with the cloud and with the sea, for Moses and the pillar of cloud naturally went through the sea. That does not alter the fact that the sea stood dry. The Israelites therefore did not get wet. The expression therefore does not refer to the water of the sea but to becoming one with it.

The Lord gave the commands to Moses, and Moses went where the Lord sent him. Where the people followed him, they had part in Moses. In the same way we follow the Lord Jesus Christ as High Priest of the new covenant. By following Him we have part in Him and are baptized in Him. That is why we also learn that we are blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. We have died, been buried, and risen with Christ and have been seated with Him in the heavenlies. We are one with Christ because the same Spirit, the same life, is in us. That is what binds us together.

The exodus of Israel from Egypt under Moses' leadership is a picture of Christ and the church. That is generally known. No one—not even those in the church who read the law—takes it literally when it says: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt." Apparently one still applies it to oneself, to believers today.

Here the situation from the exodus from Egypt to the promised land is regarded as a picture of our present position as believers. We too are a redeemed people. We have been delivered from Egypt, but in a certain sense we are still on our way to the promised land. The same can be said of Israel when they had been delivered from Egypt. They were in fact already living from the blessings—or at least part of them—of the promised land. The Lord would care for Israel in the land, but that does not alter the fact that He already did so in the wilderness. He gave Israel laws, a large part of which begin: "When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, then thou shalt..." That looked forward to what was still to come.

So too is our position. We are expected to have gone forth outside the camp, yet we are still on our way to the inheritance reserved for us in heaven. We are begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:3–5). We are on our way there. In the meantime we live from what God gives us in His grace. This time is not for nothing called the dispensation of the grace of God. We long ago forfeited the right to earthly life. After all, we have been crucified with Christ. In so far as we are still in the flesh, we can lay claim to no rights in it but are dependent on what the Lord gives us. What He does not give us, He does not give us. It is as simple as that. But all this in expectation of the inheritance that awaits us. We should trust in Him, and on the way we shall, just like Israel, be tempted. After all...

1 Corinthians 10:13

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

No one can therefore say he cannot bear that temptation. Where there is temptation, the Lord will also give a way of escape. He will lead us out of it so that we may be able to bear that temptation.

Temptations are described as blessings from God, for temptation yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11). That temptation is necessary to train us, to make us strong. That is why it also says we should count temptation for great joy. Of course assuming our desire is to be faithful to the Lord who leads us on our wilderness journey. It is rather fine that we have these histories from the Old Testament from which we can draw this certainty. We not only have the promises in black and white but also illustrations from the course of history in which God has proved not only that He can do what He said but also that He does do what He said.

The fathers were all under the cloud. That cloud was a protection for Israel. The cloud was above them, sometimes before, sometimes behind the people. At any rate it concerns that the cloud offered protection.

“Overshadow” = protection from above.

They were all under the cloud = a picture of spiritual things. A cloud is not tangible but visible. It has no fixed form and is therefore a picture of all unseen things that have no tangible form at all.

They all passed through the sea, which for that purpose stood dry. The Israelites went through the sea, after which the Egyptians thought they could do the same trick, but that went disastrously wrong. Only those who belonged to Moses reached the other side. They were all baptized unto Moses. He went before them and they followed him. They had part in him. Where Moses went, the people went.

They all ate the same spiritual meat and drank the same spiritual drink. What actually happened in history was not so much spiritual but simply literal. Manna literally fell in the wilderness for forty years. Besides that they also drank the same water.

That it is called spiritual is because this had a spiritual meaning. It is a picture of the spiritual meat we eat, just as the water is a picture of the spiritual drink we drink. The temptations in those days are pictures of the temptations we encounter. Moses is a picture of Christ. Although he sometimes also serves as a figure of Judaism.

They drank from the spiritual Rock. Yet that Rock could be struck. If it had been a spiritual Rock, you would strike right through it with a staff. It was therefore indeed a literal rock. They were things that have another meaning.

As long as Christianity has existed there has been difficulty about typology, but typology is a completely biblical principle. God in times past spoke unto the fathers by the prophets in many portions and in divers manners (Hebrews 1:1). You therefore cannot permit yourself to listen only to one manner of speaking and lay the other aside. God speaks to us among other ways through this symbolic manner. There are quite a number of things in the Bible that, besides being mentioned literally, also have a figurative meaning. That is by the way a classic form of communication that we have lost in recent times. In former times churches were all painted inside with pictures, because most people could not read. Then those stories are pictured so that people can still “read” them. In our day quite a lot of instructions come to us through pictures. Think for example of traffic signs, but also symbols on packaging.

God has therefore also given those things in the form of types. In this case to impress upon us that we should not lust after evil things. 1 Corinthians 10:7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

The Israelites were idolaters, and we are told not to become idolaters too, because we know where that leads. That brings judgment with it. At least it is suggested here that where we deny Him, we run the risk that He will also deny us. Why should the Lord care for us if we are not willing to walk in step at all and are willing to follow Him?

We should run the race so that we may obtain that prize. That of course means only if the possibility also exists that we do not obtain that prize. This chapter is a solemn warning.

In any case, the Israelites all ate the same spiritual meat. That is a reference to Exodus 16, where Israel receives food in the wilderness. Normally there is no food for a whole people there.

Exodus 16:13 And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.

Exodus 16:14 And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.

Exodus 16:15 And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.

It is manna = it is “what is it?”

The Israelites had to gather that manna every day for forty years in the wilderness. It served as a kind of grain. Among other things they baked bread from it. They did not know what it was.

Exodus 16:16

This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents.

Moses said unto them: This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat. This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded.

No colon after it, just a full stop.

Throughout the whole Bible we find this phenomenon of two sentences following one another, built up in exactly the same way, but where here and there a word is changed. A word from the first sentence is replaced by another word in the second. That is called parallelism. It is a normal figure of speech, most used in songs and poems but also occurring in ordinary prose. It means one should read those sentences alongside one another.

- Parallelism;

In Hebrew poetry parallelism is the most important figure of speech. The official name for this figure is in Latin *parallelismus membrorum*, or “parallelism, i.e. parallelism of the parts.” This means there are at least two parallel lines of verse. The sentences strengthen one another or complement one another. The same thing is said with other words or concepts. In Hebrew poetry it often concerns parallel ideas rather than parallelism of rhyme or tone.

There are different kinds of parallelism:

- Synonymous parallelism;

Synonymous parallelism or corresponding parallelism means the same or a similar thought is repeated. Two parts reflecting one thought. It is a repetition of the thought in the second half of the first verse part. Both halves thus say the same thing in different wording, sometimes in an almost imperceptible variation. Some examples.

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork (Psalm 19:1).

“Heavens” and “firmament” are parallel, as are “declare” and “sheweth.” The same applies to “the glory of God” and “his handywork.”

Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths (Psalm 25:4). Thy hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee (Psalm 21:8). What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? (Psalm 8:4).

From the book of Proverbs the following:

A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother (Proverbs 10:1). Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14:34). A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger (Proverbs 15:1). A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps (Proverbs 16:9). The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD (Proverbs 16:33).

- Antithetic parallelism;

Antithetic parallelism or contrasting parallelism is easily recognised because the thought of the second verse part forms a contrast with that of the first, so that there is an antithesis. A classic example is found in Psalm 1:6. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish. The psalmist sets the fact that God cares for His people over against the destruction of the wicked. “The way of the righteous” contrasts with “the way of the ungodly.” “Knoweth” stands over against “shall perish.” Another characteristic example of antithetic parallelism in Proverbs.

A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother (Proverbs 10:1). Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14:34). A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger (Proverbs 15:1). A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps (Proverbs 16:9). The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD (Proverbs 16:33).

- Synthetic parallelism;

Synthetic parallelism or complementary parallelism is often found in the poetic books. The two verse halves complement one another, the thought in the first part being further developed in the second part. In the second line the thought raised in the first line is completed. This phenomenon originates in antiphonal singing, which is very common in the East. Two or more different voices answer one another or complement one another. There is not here the playfulness and abundance as with synonyms, as Dr B. Wielenga notes.¹ Nonetheless the combination can testify to literary beauty.

An example from the Psalms.

For he shall be as a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither (Psalm 1:3). In this psalm the second line further specifies what kind of tree it is.

There are scholars who wonder whether with synthetic parallelism we can really speak of parallelism. The two lines belong together and are related to one another, yet the relation is not so clear and defined as with the other two variants discussed.

- Emblematic parallelism

One more type of parallelism deserves mention: it was called emblematic parallelism by R. Lowth. Here in one part of a verse a thought is formulated literally, while the other part repeats the thought in figurative language:

As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion (Proverbs 11:22). Nice to know:

In Genesis 1:1 – 2:4 stands the first creation account. In the creation days a parallelism is found:

Day 1: light; Day 4: light

Day 2: firmament; Day 5: firmament

Day 3: land; Day 6: land (From www.kunst-en-cultuur.infonu.nl)

These are generally known matters, also in the world of Bible expositors. Here too therefore it is a synonymous parallelism:

This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.

This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded.

The bread which the LORD hath given you to eat is the picture of the word which the LORD hath commanded.

The Israelites did not know what it was, and so we want to know what it is. It immediately says what it is. First in the literal sense, namely that this is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat, and then in the figurative sense, namely that this is the thing which the LORD hath commanded. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4). There need therefore be no doubt whatever that the manna is a picture of the word of God. It simply says so. See also John 6. Man should live from the word of God. The question is with what we feed ourselves, whether we know that manna. Why are so many believers so weak?

We as believers should feed on the word from which we have been born again to a lively hope. We have accepted that word and come to a choice. The intention is of course that we then also live from that word. The Israelites loathed that bread, but the Lord gave them nothing else to eat. There is enough for everyone, day in, day out.

They ate the manna daily, and we search the Scriptures daily whether these things are so. In all cases daily, for this is our food.

Exodus 16:17

And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less.

Gather = read.

We gather knowledge by reading from the word of God.

The Israelites not only ate the spiritual meat but all also drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them. The Israelites murmured, had nothing to drink, and wanted to return to Egypt because they thought it was better there. Many Christians consider themselves children of God, but because they are still here in the world for the present, they must make do here. They fight for a place in the world and for recognition in society. Humanly speaking that does indeed look rather interesting. But that is not the intention.

The people therefore had thirst, but there was no water. So they murmured.

Exodus 17:4

And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.

Exodus 17:5

And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.

It is always the same rod. Moses carried no rod because everyone carried a rod, but because the rod is one of the attributes of the tribal chief. That is why later the rods of the tribal heads of Israel had to be laid before the ark of the covenant.

Moses was in a certain way tribal chief of the tribe of Levi, but strictly speaking it was his brother Aaron. That rod, of Aaron, later blossomed. Probably it is the same rod. But whether that rod was Moses' or Aaron's makes little difference; that rod is the figure of the tribe of Levi. Moses and Aaron were both heads of that tribe, Moses representing the political side and Aaron the religious side as high priest of the Old Covenant. Both are therefore mentioned one after the other in Hebrews. Moses and Aaron, but Christ is more than Moses and Christ is more than Aaron.

The rod is also a picture of resurrection, which also explains why it later blossomed. In fact one should be surprised if that rod did not come to life. The rod is after all the picture of life.

Exodus 17:6

Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Exodus 17:7

And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

The Israelites had their doubts about it there.

Moses struck the Rock. In this case he is indeed a picture of Judaism. The rock is a picture of Christ. When that Rock is struck, it happens through Judaism and thus by the Jewish people. It is a picture of how the Lord Jesus Christ would be rejected by the Jewish people, living under the law, of which Moses is a picture. They crucified Him, but God raised Him, and so He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him. It is even pictured in that after the Lord Jesus died and His side was pierced, there came out blood and water from His side. The picture is repeated again and again. It is a picture of life from death and more especially from the Crucified.

Which rock? The rock in Horeb. One may wonder which rock that was.

Synopsis of parallelism in Hebrew poetry. It is a dominant feature of biblical poetry (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, prophetic poetry, Song of Songs, Lamentations), far more important than rhyme, meter, or alliteration.

Parallelism means two (or more) parallel lines (cola/stichs) that strengthen, complement, or relate to each other — the same thought is expressed in different words, or contrasted, or developed.

Main Types of Parallelism (with Examples)

1. Synonymous (Corresponding / Identical) Parallelism

- The second line repeats or restates the same thought in different (often synonymous) words → emphasis through repetition.
 - Most common type.
 - Examples:
 - Psalm 19:1 → "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork."
(heavens = firmament; declare = sheweth; glory of God = his handywork)
 - Psalm 25:4 → "Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths."
 - Psalm 8:4 → "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"
 - Proverbs 10:1 → "A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." (repeated idea in contrast)
 - Proverbs 15:1 → "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."
2. Antithetic (Contrasting / Oppositional) Parallelism
- The second line contrasts or opposes the first → highlights truth through opposition ("but").
 - Very frequent in Proverbs (moral contrasts).
 - Examples:
 - Psalm 1:6 → "For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."
(knoweth vs perish; righteous vs ungodly)
 - Proverbs 14:34 → "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."
 - Proverbs 15:1 → "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."
 - Proverbs 16:9 → "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps."
3. Synthetic (Complementary / Developmental) Parallelism
- The second line completes, expands, or develops the thought of the first → adds explanation, consequence, or intensification (not strict repetition or contrast).
 - Some scholars debate if this is true "parallelism" (more like progression).
 - Examples:
 - Psalm 1:3 → "For he shall be as a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither."
(first line: tree planted by water; second: develops fruit + enduring leaf)
 - Psalm 23:1 → "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."
(second line completes the implication of the first)
 - Proverbs 16:33 → "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD."
(second line develops/explains sovereignty)
4. Emblematic (Figurative / Illustrative) Parallelism

- One line states the idea literally, the other repeats it figuratively (simile, metaphor, emblem, or illustration).
- Often introduced by "like/as" (or implied).
- Examples:
 - Proverbs 11:22 → "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion."
(literal jewel in swine's snout → figurative beautiful woman without discretion)
 - Psalm 42:1 → "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."
 - Proverbs 25:11 → "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

Additional Notes on Parallelism

- Combination / Mixed Types: Many verses blend types (e.g., synonymous + antithetic in Proverbs).
- Not Rhyme/Meter: Hebrew poetry relies on thought-parallelism, not sound/rhyme (unlike English poetry).
- Purpose: Emphasis, reinforcement, contrast, beauty, memorability, teaching moral/spiritual truth (especially in Proverbs/Psalms).
- Genesis 1 Creation Days Parallelism (not strict poetry, but structured narrative with poetic elements):
 - Days 1–3 (forming realms): light/dark (Day 1) → sky/firmament (Day 2) → land/seas + plants (Day 3).
 - Days 4–6 (filling realms): sun/moon/stars (Day 4) → birds/fish (Day 5) → animals + humans (Day 6).
 - This parallel framework shows order and symmetry (not random), emphasizing God's purposeful design.

Manna as a Picture of the Word of God (Exodus 16; Deuteronomy 8; John 6)

- Literal manna (Exodus 16): Miraculous bread from heaven daily → sustained Israel in wilderness.
 - Called "What is it?" (manna) because unknown.
 - Daily provision tested faith/obedience (gather only daily, except Sabbath).
- Spiritual picture (Deuteronomy 8:3): "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD."
 - Manna taught dependence on God's Word for life (not just physical bread).
- Christ fulfillment (John 6): Jesus = "the true bread from heaven" / "bread of life."
 - "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die." (John 6:49–50)
 - Manna sustained temporal life → Christ gives eternal life.
 - Eat Christ's flesh (believe/receive Him) → live forever.

Moses Striking the Rock at Horeb (Exodus 17:1–7) as Picture of Christ

- Event: Israel thirsts at Rephidim (Massah/Meribah); God tells Moses to strike rock at Horeb → water flows.
- Typological picture (1 Corinthians 10:4): "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

- Rock = Christ (struck once → water/life flows).
- Striking = Christ's crucifixion (judgment on sin → blood + water from side, John 19:34).
- Water = spiritual life/blessings from Christ's death/resurrection.
- "Followed them" = Christ's presence/supply throughout wilderness (spiritual Rock).
- Key contrast: First striking (Exodus 17) = Christ judged for us. Later incident (Numbers 20) = Moses strikes again (disobedience) → barred from Promised Land (shows one striking sufficient).

This synopsis captures the main biblical patterns and examples from your text.

1 Corinthians 10:4

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

The Rock is Christ. But why did that Rock follow them? They drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them. Calvin's explanation is that the rock did not of course follow them, but that the rock stands for the water and the water followed them. Calvin therefore could not do much with it.

In the original text it literally says: And the Rock followed them. They travelled through the wilderness and the Rock went with them and went where they all went. A mobile rock, then. One reasons it away by saying it cannot be meant that way. In the Old Testament one also nowhere finds that a rock went with the people. Only that wherever they came there was a rock or the rock.

Jewish tradition, however, does indeed know a rock that went with them in the wilderness. One of the most common commentaries is that Paul here aligns himself with Jewish tradition. By tradition we then mean what the Jews believed. If Paul aligns himself with Jewish tradition, then we do have a problem, for in the first place we assume that these verses too are inspired by God, and if Paul, inspired, aligns himself with Jewish tradition, then Jewish tradition is correct on this point. In other words, one can hardly get round the fact that there was a rock that belonged to Israel's inventory. Apart from that it makes little difference whether there was one specific rock or several; in any case it is the picture of life brought forth from Christ. He is the Rock, unshakeable and always near, so to speak.

The other variant is that the rock is not taken literally, but that that rock is Christ and therefore Christ went with the people through the wilderness (Chrysostom, ca. 304–407).

The story from the Targum is that the rock went with them of its own accord. It came after them. Those people did not have this text from 1 Corinthians 10 at their disposal, only the Old Testament. That rock came after the people in some way. When the camp was pitched, the rock lay at the entrance of the tabernacle. The elders of Israel then stood around the rock and called to the rock: "You Source, give water," or something like that.

If one has only the Old Testament, one wonders where on earth they got that from. But if one reads 1 Corinthians 10, then they too must have had some ground for it.

The Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ. Whatever meaning one gives it, it at any rate means that there was always a rock that gave water. That rock is under all circumstances a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is with us, who is with His people,

who dwells in the midst of us and gives us life. He gives us to eat of His word and to drink of the water, but water is just as much a picture of the word of God. As strange as it seems to us, in practice it is therefore not so strange.

What it concerns is that the people were one and that the Lord cared for them. They were blessed in and with Moses, who represented the Lord. Despite that unity and that they were a redeemed people, the Lord had no pleasure in the majority of them and therefore they were overthrown in the wilderness (verse 5). They perished in the wilderness. Do not say that God did not fulfil His promises, for He did bring Israel into the promised land, but the extent to which an individual Israelite had part in it is another matter. That applies to us just as much. The Bible says we are predestinated in Christ to adoption as sons, but whether you actually have part in that adoption is very much open to question. It is indeed the will of God that you have part in it, but it was also His will that all Israel should reach Canaan. Yet that did not turn out well. The people did reach Canaan, exactly as the Lord had said, but as for the individual members of the people it looked rather different. That is precisely the situation we are in and why this passage of Scripture is written here. We should look at that history and learn from it how God deals with His people. The church will collectively be placed as son and receive the glory of Christ and will also manifest the glory of Christ in the future.

For they were overthrown in the wilderness.

For = from this we can see how it went. We learn from Old Testament history that in the end only two people of all those delivered from Egypt reached Canaan.

The same picture is used in Hebrews 3 and 4. Israel, delivered from Egypt and then perished in the wilderness through the temptation of idolatry and the like.

We are therefore solemnly warned not to follow that example but to realise who we have become. We are one with Christ and have part in Him. It is also our personal responsibility to submit to Him and acknowledge Him as Lord. Although He goes ways with us that probably would not have been ours, we nonetheless have to run the race set before us.

1 Corinthians 10:6

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

In verse 11 it says: Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition. Thereby an old theological discussion is immediately ended—namely whether these things literally happened or whether they are only stories from which we should draw instruction in some way. The answer is: both. It literally happened and we should draw instruction from it. All these things happened unto them. It is therefore history. They are written for our admonition. This automatically means that the way it is written is specifically intended for us. We are not dealing with inspired history but with the inspired word of God. The account of the history is inspired. That also proves decisive for the way that account is given. Things are told us that are absolutely not important for history but are for us. Because they are for our instruction. On the other hand one finds that things that are historically of great importance are omitted. That is because they are of less importance for us. That is also the explanation for the occasionally remarkable formulations. The manner of formulation is immediately decisive for the meaning that must be given to it.

Deuteronomy 8:3

And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat, namely, this is the word that the LORD hath commanded. What proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD is of course the word. That is also added in Matthew 4:4, where this verse is quoted, that it concerns the word. The Lord said this during the temptation in the wilderness.

We too should live by every word that the Lord speaks, through His word. One should not think too little of it and not deal too superficially with that word. It is the living word of God that should give us life.

These things happened unto us for examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Now follow some examples of that evil.

1 Corinthians 10:7

Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

This is quoted from Exodus 32:6, from the history of the golden calf, with which it is emphatically said—not only here but also in the Old Testament—that this golden calf was idolatry. That is all the more remarkable because the golden calf was first and foremost intended to stand in the place of the Lord.

Through Aaron the golden calf was made.

Exodus 32:4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

It was cast and then worked with a graving tool, a chisel, a graver. Graver = a tool to work with or to write in the clay of clay tablets. With such a tool metals can also be worked.

This word appears later in the Bible once more as a writing instrument (Isaiah 8:1). In other words, Aaron wrote as it were.

Exodus 32:5 And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD.

To the LORD = for Jehovah. Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD. In other words, they called this golden calf Jehovah. He had brought them out of Egypt, but they replaced the Lord with a golden calf, which they did indeed call Jehovah, whom they ascribed the exodus from Egypt to. One can hardly say they went to serve other gods, yet something else came in the place of Jehovah and in the place of the service of Jehovah.

Why did Aaron do this? The service of the golden calf is beforehand, long in advance, a picture of Judaism, made, put together, written with a graver by the Levitical priests within the tribe of Judah, who after all developed that system in the Babylonian captivity. Aaron is a picture of the Levitical priests, of whom he is the model, the prototype. He is their head, the first also. His successors later invented Judaism, within which one pretends to serve Jehovah but in reality practises idolatry and rejects the Lord Himself. They became as it were deaf to the word of the Lord. Hence those earrings. The ears were no longer pierced, so to speak. They no longer heard. In their place came another writing, Judaism.

Typology sometimes goes very far. Judaism in itself again serves as a model for all religion in the world. Judaism functions therein as a practical example. One can see from it what becomes of religion. Nothing comes of it and in any case it leads to unbelief, to rejecting the Lord, even though one calls the God one serves by the name of the Lord. The New Testament says that too: "In thy name we have done this and in thy name we have done that," but the Lord Jesus says: "Depart from me, I never knew you." In any case, it is regarded as a form of idolatry. They became idolaters and the people sat down to eat and drink; afterwards they rose up to play. Judgment came upon them.

1 Corinthians 10:8

Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

One says of this verse that Paul wrote it somewhat from memory, for the number of dead was not 23,000 but 24,000. That would mean God did not inspire this and Paul made a mistake. This verse refers to Numbers 25, where the Israelites commit fornication and idolatry at Shittim.

Numbers 25:9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

In 1 Corinthians 10:8 it says 23,000. The numbers are different. Is that contradictory?

No, for in Numbers it says those that died in the plague were twenty-four thousand, while 1 Corinthians 10:8 says there fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Apparently the other thousand died only the next day. They became sick and died. On the same day apparently 23,000 and the next day another thousand. There is nothing contradictory in that. One simply compares Scripture with Scripture before drawing conclusions from one passage. One lays all the texts about it alongside one another and then comes to this conclusion. There is often a difference between numbers mentioned in the Bible, but in most cases it resolves itself. One must simply read accurately.

Nonetheless, it is a very large number. One must not think of 23,000 people of one's people dying in one day. It serves as a deterrent example for us.

1 Corinthians 10:9

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

That is the history in the wilderness with the serpent lifted up. The Israelites were bitten by serpents below as a judgment from God. The Lord then said to Moses that he should make a serpent of brass and set it on a pole of brass. If one looked at that serpent, one was healed. This history is also cited in John 3, where it even says what it pictures. It is not just a story telling one to be careful lest judgment from God follow, but much more than that.

This history is found in Numbers 21. The Israelites once again had problems with the food: "Our soul loatheth this light bread." Moreover, they had no water.

Numbers 21:6 - 9

And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take

away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

A beautiful history, because we learn from John 3 that this serpent, which Moses lifted up, is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ in His exaltation—namely in His heavenly position.

John 3:13

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

John 3:14

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

John 3:15

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so...

The serpent in the wilderness is a type. Christ is the fulfilment of it. The lifted-up serpent is a picture of the Son of man. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Then follows the well-known verse: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

God gave His Son—who is also the Son of man—as the cause of eternal salvation for all who obey Him. He is in heaven, at the right hand of God, so that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

In short, the lifted-up serpent is a picture of the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec—of Him who was taken from among men and appointed in the things pertaining to God.

If the lifted-up serpent is a picture of the High Priest of the new covenant, then the serpents by which people were bitten are a picture of the high priests of the old covenant. In Hebrews there is also a comparison between the many high priests of the old covenant and the one High Priest of the new covenant. The old covenant is in itself weak and unprofitable and a ministration of death. The high priests of the old covenant were prevented from continuing by death. Only when one comes to or looks upon the High Priest of the new covenant does one receive life.

Why did Moses have to make that serpent? Moses stands for the law, but out of that law came Christ. The Lord Jesus came in the fulness of time, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, to fulfil the law, and thereby to do what the law itself could not. The old covenant of the law of Moses was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus. He lived under the law, bore its consequences, and died in accordance with the law—for the whole people—in His position as Redeemer. That is not contrary to the law but in accordance with the law. Thus redemption came about, and thereby we too have been delivered from the law.

We are delivered from religion—and first and foremost from Judaism—through the High Priest of the new covenant. We should serve Him and follow Him.

1 Corinthians 10:10

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Likewise a reference to Exodus 16 and Numbers 14.

Judgment therefore came upon the people of Israel. That is the judgment described in this negative form in many places, especially in the epistle to the Hebrews. In Hebrews 3 and 4 we also find the comparison between the people of Israel in the wilderness and our position as believers. There too the wrong example of Israel is set before us. There it says that the Lord was provoked with them forty years. He was provoked with those who sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. They had sinned and were disobedient to the word of God. We see that they could not enter in because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:17–19). The Lord has also promised us an inheritance—not in Canaan but in a heavenly and better fatherland. Exactly the same things apply there. The only question is what becomes of it in practice. Whether we are indeed faithful to the Lord. We believe that once you have come to faith, you have received eternal life and can never lose it again. But to think that coming to faith is the goal of life is a misunderstanding. Coming to faith is of course not the end point. Thank God it is not. Suppose you are nine years old and have already reached the goal of your life—what then should you do for the rest of your life? But it is not so. God gives us a race to run. When you receive life, then it only begins. So it is also with eternal life. When you receive that, then it only begins. Then you go on living that life in trust in the Lord, trusting in His promises. That is called walking by faith. We do that so that we may receive reward for it.

It can also be the other way round—not that you can lose eternal life, but you can lose your reward. We should be well aware of the situation we are in and of the responsibility we have toward the Lord—to run our race and submit to His will and thereby in practice to His word, so that living from it we may also receive His approval: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant...” We should look forward to that, and if all is well we also desire it. That He who has begun a good work in us will also perform it until the day of Christ. That does not go against our will. It only happens when we consciously present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.

1 Corinthians 10:11

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

All Old Testament histories are written for our admonition, so that we should not fall into the same example of unbelief.

Upon whom the ends of the world are come = at most two ages. In fact it is only one. “Ends of the ages” is a plural of extension. It is easiest to explain by means of the other expression, the ages to come, from Ephesians 2:7: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. There is but one age to come. To indicate or at least strengthen the boundlessness of that age, the word is occasionally used in the plural. When the noun stands in the plural, then its end is also plural: ends of the ages. But it is simply the end of the age.

If one still wants a numerical plural, one must look a little further, but one never gets beyond two ages: the present age and the age to come. In a certain sense we live in both ages. We live in the closing of the present age and in the beginning of the age to come. Galatians 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father;

“World” = aiōn. The same word as in 1 Corinthians 10:11. From the rest of the epistle it appears that this is not a future work of the Lord but a present work. He delivers us now from this present evil world. The most important aspect of that is that He delivers us from the dominion of the law—not only doctrinally but also in the practice of life.

It is not for nothing that the word “age” is also translated “world.” It is of course not about a time from which one is delivered, for time simply goes on. One cannot be delivered from time. We live subject to time. It is therefore not about time as such but about the character of that time. It concerns the circumstances.

This present world is evil, for this age is ruled by the god of this age, that is, the devil. The fact that Satan rules this age makes this age what it is. It is an evil age, for the evil one rules.

Matthew 24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

When shall these things be? The destruction of the temple and Jerusalem and all that goes with it.

End of the world = end of the age

.It concerns the events surrounding the future of the Son of man, the return of Christ, to put an end on earth to the dominion of the adversary and to establish His own kingdom.

That is called the end of the age, or consummation of the age. Logically it is the end of this present age. Because Christ has not yet returned, as far as time is concerned we still live in this present age, but Galatians 1:4 says the Lord will deliver us from it.

We should not live under the dominion of the evil one, for we serve another God. We do not live according to the rudiments of the world but under the principles of the new covenant.

Titus 2:11

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

Titus 2:12

Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

This present world = this present age.

We live in it, but the Lord wants to deliver us from it. We live in this world limitedly, soberly. We stand with one foot in this present age and with the other in the age to come. The purpose of the work the Lord does on, in, and through us is that He draws us out of this present evil age. We should learn to live under the principles of the new covenant and the age to come.

The age to come began at the resurrection of Christ, and according to Ephesians 2 we also live in it. That does not alter the fact that this present evil age is only officially ended at the return of Christ, when Satan is bound and Christ Himself establishes His kingdom on earth. Those two ages therefore exist side by side in these days. For it is not about time but about the circumstances in which we live. That also has to do with the two different natures of the believer.

If one wishes, one might perhaps read 1 Corinthians 10:11 as though the end of this present evil age has come upon us, but also the beginning of the age to come. Nonetheless, the ends of the ages refers only to the end of this present evil age. That age lasts a very long time; hence the plural.

Whole theories are built around the word “age,” especially using the fact that it sometimes stands in the plural to teach that there are all sorts of different ages. After first hearing that the history of salvation is determined by dispensations, others again discover that it is not only dispensations but also ages. Thus one arrives at a series of ages, simply because every time that word stands in the plural it is concluded that there must be at least two.

When the Preacher says there is nothing new under the sun and that what is has been in former ages, then there must already have been two ages. The same applies to ages to come. That too stands in the plural and therefore there must also be several ages to come. Especially those ages to come are needed. If one is lost for ever, that lasts an age, but then another age comes and one is saved again. That is what they need it for. Wherever one encounters the teaching of successive ages, it inevitably leads to the teaching of universal reconciliation. They need that to underpin that teaching.

In any case, a word in the plural is therefore not always a numerical plural.

When the Bible speaks of the waters, how many waters is it about? It is simply much water and therefore it is called the waters.

It is a pluralis extensionis. The word already implies that it concerns something extended, something one cannot see or survey.

Upon us the ends of the ages have come. We are being drawn out of these ages.

Moreover, where we acknowledge the Lord Jesus as the only Potentate, there we accept the age to come, which began at the resurrection of Christ when He said: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” That in practice others still exercise power is none of our business. That may be so, but we should learn to pay no attention to it.

When we learn that, we are drawn out of this present evil age.

The resurrection of Christ was not only the beginning of the end of this present evil age but also officially the end of the whole Old Covenant. What is mentioned in passing is that these histories from the Old Testament—and therefore from that old age—are beforehand pictures of things that belong to the age to come. In Hebrews quite extensive speaking is done about the things to come, while in fact it concerns things in which we already live. They are described as things to come, but from an Old Testament standpoint. For example from the standpoint of Israel in the wilderness, or from the situation around the tabernacle, with the holy place and the holiest of all and the Day of Atonement. There speaking is done about better things, but also about things to come and good things to come, but from the time then present. It says future, but meanwhile it is the present.

The same applies to Ephesians 2.

Ephesians 2:5 - 7

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

There is but one age to come. To indicate or at least strengthen the boundlessness of that age, the word is occasionally used in the plural. When the noun stands in the plural, then its end is also plural: ends of the ages. But it is simply the end of the age.

If one still wants a numerical plural, one must look a little further, but one never gets beyond two ages: the present age and the age to come. In a certain sense we live in both ages. We live in the closing of the present age and in the beginning of the age to come. God has made us alive to do something with it in the ages to come. Of course one can say that in the meantime one simply enjoys it, because God does not need us yet, but one should realise that God is right now showing the exceeding riches of His grace through His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. The riches of God's grace are demonstrated in us while we are still in the flesh and while we are still considered weak with all our human failings. The power of God's grace is able to accomplish much in our lives—after all: My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). The power of God's grace is demonstrated precisely where sin—and therefore weakness—still is. That is why we have become a spectacle to principalities and powers.

The ages to come are therefore viewed from the time before this period arrived. We now live in the ages to come and already have part in the good things to come.

Israel's future began at the exodus from Egypt. They were not yet in the promised land, but their future had already begun. They had been delivered from and out of Egypt. The intention was that they would no longer think of it—which, however, they did. The other example is Lot's wife. She was delivered, but looked back anyway. One should not do that. These things are therefore written for our admonition.

1 Corinthians 10:12

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

So then, he who thinks he has a position in the church, take heed lest he fall. That is in fact what the whole epistle is about.

All believers individually take a position within the church. God gives us a place in it, and in that place we should stand fast or remain standing. We have to do with a powerful adversary, the god of this age, but we should stand and keep standing and for that purpose put on the whole armour of God.

Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup (1 Corinthians 11:28). That still concerns the same thing, in connection with the Lord's Supper. We should stand fast in our position and stand fast in the fight against this present evil age. The Corinthians lived according to worldly principles, which are normal for everyone—certainly for the natural man—but not for a believer. Because we are children of God we have received no place in society but in the church.

That we can fall is obvious, because what happened to Israel also happens to us—namely temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

No temptation has taken you. One is taken captive by that temptation and limited in one's doing and not doing, and certainly in one's thinking. Someone who does nothing

can also not be taken captive, and someone who does not think neither (said cynically, of course). The intention is indeed that we think and act.

No temptation has taken you but such as is common to man = temptation that comes from man. Probably first and foremost the old man himself is meant. Temptation usually comes from one's own desire. But wherever it comes from—even if it comes a hundred times from the devil (which is usually the case), for we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers—we should stand fast. Nonetheless, it actually comes from within, because as human beings we are simply susceptible to it.

James 1:13 - 15

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

That is what the devil did to the Lord Jesus in the temptation in the wilderness. The devil shows the Lord Jesus something and says: "Look, I will give you all this if..." and thereby desire is awakened. Then the question is whether you can resist it, whether you are proof against it. If the devil could not prevent you from coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then he will do everything to prevent you from actually living from that faith—so that you are useless for demonstrating God's grace.

Temptation is therefore human, but there is a sequel to it.

James 1:2

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

James 1:3

Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

That temptation does have benefit, but the word "temptation" is immediately replaced by the word "trying."

Temptation is an attempt to destroy something, while trying tests how strong something is. When living things are tried, they become stronger through it. That is called training.

James 1:12

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Here too temptation is immediately replaced by trying. It was something negative but is immediately replaced by a more positive concept.

1 Peter 1:6

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

1 Peter 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ;

Here too temptation is immediately replaced by trial, whereby it is positively valued.

These verses correspond to those in James 1, where the crown of life is spoken of. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Some conclude from this that God does lead us into temptation. The prayer is also not that He should not lead us into temptation, but that He should instead deliver us from evil. It is: Lead us out of temptation and deliver us from evil—implying that the temptation comes from the evil one, and further implying that we know who that is.

1 Corinthians 10:13

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

You can never say you cannot bear it. That can indeed happen, for that is what it says here. God does not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able. Where that temptation is, there He will also lead you out of it. Nowhere does it say the Lord will remove the temptation, but that we should be able to bear that temptation. If the waters become too high, He lifts us up. On occasion we can therefore do much more than we thought and held possible. That is how the Lord works. We should simply have the confidence that if that temptation comes, He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear. Many believers have endured those temptations unto death. They could, because the Lord gave them the strength for it. The proof of that we again find in the history of Israel in the wilderness. Of course it was no picnic there. They sometimes had hunger and thirst too, but that is of course no reason to blame the Lord for it. The Lord had promised them He would bring them into the promised land. That on the way one sometimes has hunger and thirst, or meets an enemy—that is just how it is. God had promised it.

Look also at the history of David. He comes as the youngest in the family bringing lunch parcels for his brothers. His brothers send him away, but while that happens Goliath appears there. David asks whether there is then no one who can help him against the Philistines. There was not. Therefore David said he would do it. How did the man come to that? He must have thought nothing could happen to him, for he had after all been anointed king by Samuel. Nothing could therefore happen to him. He probably simply trusted in the Lord's promises. Later he crept into Saul's tent, in the middle of Saul's army camp, cut off a piece of Saul's mantle, and departed again. Read also the psalms he wrote in connection with these histories. How he also appealed to what God had promised him.

That is also our position. God has made promises to us, and when we are tempted we can appeal to those promises and trust that the Lord keeps His promises. That is living by faith.

Through the temptations our faith is tried and thereby trained and produces from itself a very excellent eternal fruit of righteousness.

The Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 10:14

Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

Until recently we lived here in the Netherlands in a culture that knew no idols. People were Christian or they were not. That is why we can think we have no message here, but we must understand that the whole world is ruled by idolatry. Those so-called idols are demons, and they exercise power over this world. The whole world lies in the evil one. That is the position of this world. It is ruled by these idols. Whether one calls them idols is another matter. Whether one regards them as religion or not is also another matter. We associate theology with religion, but why would philosophy be something different?

Philosophy is called philosophy simply because the word God does not appear in it. If God does appear in it, we suddenly call it theology, but it is the same thing. If you want to become a minister, you must study both. It is idolatry.

Nonetheless, religious rites are here cited as examples. Suddenly the Lord's Supper comes up. This expression anticipates

1 Corinthians 11:20

When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.

1 Corinthians 11:21

For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

That term has stuck, while the Bible says that is precisely not what it is. One eats the Lord's Supper only at home. When people come together in Scripture there is mention of bread and cup. That may be a somewhat unfortunate expression, for the bread is what one eats, but the cup is not what one drinks. Nonetheless, this term has stuck because it alliterates nicely. It should be bread and wine, or plate and cup, but perhaps they used no plate at all. In what follows we shall nonetheless call it the Lord's Supper, because we are simply accustomed to that word.

Flee from idolatry. And suddenly the Lord's Supper comes up. That is sudden, because the whole Lord's Supper is mentioned nowhere else in the epistles. It occurs at the institution of the holy supper in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. After that nowhere else, except here in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11. In Acts 2:46 it still says that the believers continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. But if one reads the commentaries on it, not many consider this breaking of bread to be the celebration of the holy supper. It is also not obvious to read that into it. More obvious is that they came together and ate together. Whether that was the ritual act of bread and cup is therefore very much open to question.

We therefore find the Lord's Supper only in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, which is one exposition of the same subject, nowhere else.

The Lord's Supper is regarded as a ritual meal not intended to satisfy the needs of the natural man. They could do that at home. The Lord's Supper is compared with a meal that is also ritual in the first place—namely on the one hand in Israel under the Levitical legislation (see verse 18) and on the other with the ritual sacrificial meal as the Gentiles knew it.

In the ritual meal under the Levitical legislation one also ate together of food of which part had lain on the altar. It was actually intended for the Lord, but one ate of it oneself, as it were together with the Lord. That is why it corresponds as a picture to the Lord's Supper.

Besides that there was also the practice among the Gentiles, throughout the world, that one first dedicated food to the gods, after which one ate all or part of it oneself. In all cases that expresses fellowship with one another and with the gods. That is also the meaning of bread and cup.

We therefore find three things:

- The Lord's Supper;
- The sacrificial meal from the Old Testament ordinances;
- The sacrificial meals as the Gentiles knew them.

1 Corinthians 10:15

I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

This at any rate means that Paul suggests these Corinthians understood what he said. In other words, he does not explain anything to them but sets something before them that they were expected to understand. He did that in the preceding part of the chapter as well. They were expected to understand that. That those histories have another meaning, as Paul also says in Galatians 4, when he suddenly begins: “Understand ye not? Read ye not the law? Does it not stand in the law that Abraham had two sons and two wives? Moreover there were two mountains, which things are an allegory.” Paul reproaches them that they did not know that, or at least paid no attention to it. So here too. I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. In chapter 11, when it concerns the headcovering of women, it all goes in the form of questions. They are rhetorical questions, in which Paul assumes everyone gives an obvious answer to them. If we cannot do that, something is wrong with our thinking.

Now too Paul poses a rhetorical question...

1 Corinthians 10:16

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

Even if you have never realised it, the answer is yes. That is what it is. If you are unwise, you might perhaps still wriggle out of it. Evidently there are such unwise ones, for many regard bread and wine as a sign of the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus. That seems to be generally accepted, and it is believed almost everywhere. Some say, on the claim that the Lord’s Supper is a sign of the fellowship we have with the Lord, that this may well be so, but that Paul, for the occasion in 1 Corinthians 10, gives it a different meaning. The point is that if Paul for the occasion in 1 Corinthians 10 gives it a different meaning, then that must also be the meaning—for otherwise the whole Lord’s Supper nowhere appears in the Bible, except at the places where it is instituted. There, however, one finds no meaning of the Lord’s Supper, nor any instructions for its use, let alone any statement that not everyone may or can be admitted to the Lord’s Supper just like that. The only passage of Scripture that says anything about it is therefore this one.

It is put in the form of a question to people who are expected to be wise. So if you do not agree with Paul, you are evidently not wise.

The cup of blessing which we bless—this is several figures of speech at once. Of course it is not about the cup but about what is in it. Someone has discovered that nowhere in the Bible does it say what was or is in it. In other words, one might as well put grape juice in it. But if you ask what was on the table during the Passover meal, you surely arrive at wine—quite apart from the meaning wine carries throughout the whole Bible. The peculiar phenomenon occurs that outside Christianity everyone knows that wine is a picture of life. Wine and the vineyard are in any case a picture of life. That is also what one calls out when one has poured it: L’chaim! To life!

The same applies to the meal. It is a picture of life in general and fellowship in particular. We may live in a degenerate society, but eating is done together. One eats from the same pot as an expression of the same way of life. When people have a party, they eat—even if it is a funeral. It becomes a festive gathering because people are together again. It is an old custom that one then eats, because it is a picture of fellowship and thereby of life—life precisely in the face of death.

That is what it is about. That is what the meal represents throughout the whole Bible. Abraham prepared a meal for the Lord, or the king prepared a meal for his son. Or the meal is prepared to which one is invited but does not come, and then others come. It is all a picture of fellowship and in particular of the new covenant.

That is why one can also say, without the picture of the Lord's Supper, that we sit at the Lord's table. We eat from His table. He cares for us. Where we are one with Him, we form part of the same life-fellowship and therefore sit at His table. That is perfectly normal language.

Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? This too is of course figurative language. It is not about physical blood. The Roman Catholics have the doctrine of transubstantiation, whereby the substance of the wine is changed into the substance of the blood of the Lord Jesus. Literally. They pass over the phenomenon of metaphors, in language in general and in the Bible in particular.

It must surely be clear that this is meant as a picture, but if one says it is a picture, one weakens it—and so one says that is what it is. That is why the Bible also says that God is Word. This means that God by definition speaks and has therefore spoken in many portions and in divers manners in times past. But if one says it like that, one weakens the whole thought. One can say it much more briefly, as John does, by saying that God is Word. Those are metaphors. Our language is full of them.

By blood one understands life. So it is also used in the Bible. If one loses blood, if it flows or streams, then it is not good, for then one loses it. Then there is death. But blood is not a picture of death but of life. The soul, namely the life of man, is in the blood. If it says that the life is in the blood, then that is not something else.

The blood of Christ = the life of Christ.

When it says we are cleansed by the blood of Christ, that means we are cleansed by the life of Christ. For it is the living Christ who cleanses us. That is also the function of blood in our body. Blood is the refuse collection service, the municipal cleansing department. Blood is also the supplier of food throughout the whole body. As long as blood is in the body and is pumped round by the heart, it has those functions. The heart is the engine, the source of life.

Wine is also once called grape-blood. That is three words stuck together, but it concerns life.

Our drinking of the wine during the Lord's Supper is the expression that we have part in the life of Christ, of which it is a picture.

One leaves out all superfluous terminology and then wine is simply a picture of the blood of Christ. Even shorter: the wine is the blood of Christ. That is also how it is said here.

Wine is not the blood of Jesus. Not that that could not be, but it says the wine is the blood of Christ. The Lord Jesus only became the Christ after His resurrection. The blood of Christ is therefore the life of the risen, living Christ. The cleansing effect of His blood is therefore the cleansing effect of Christ in our lives. He cleanses us by the washing of water, namely by the word.

When we take the bread and the wine together, that is the expression of the fellowship we have with one another in Christ. We have part in the life of Christ. We have become planted together with Him in the likeness of His death, burial, and resurrection. We have been raised with Him and seated in the heavenlies. God has begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ. We have part in Him. Within the framework of this

epistle we have part in His body. We are members of His body. Members of the body are members of one another because the same blood flows in all those members. That binds the members together.

It is also not disputed that it stands here. One only adds that elsewhere it is a picture of suffering and death. That is hard, for it is precisely the opposite.

The bread which we break—is it not the communion of the body of Christ? One then says that it is not the minister or priest who breaks the bread, but that we must do it ourselves. The bread which we break is simply the expression for the bread we eat, just as they continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread in Acts 2.

When one reads the institution of the Lord's Supper, one reads that the Lord Jesus broke the bread. We break the bread that is expected to be from one bread, or one lump of dough. This too is again an expression of fellowship.

We also use the word "bread" for a lump of another material. What is called a bar of gold is also called a bread of gold.

English has two words for it there. Loaf for the whole bread and bread for a piece of the bread.

A loaf is the whole thing. That is more or less a whole body. That is the thought behind it. It is one bread. One can of course break off a piece and eat it, but it is originally one bread. For the symbolism it is also expected to remain so.

1 Corinthians 10:17

For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

We all have part in one and the same bread. It remains one. So when one celebrates the Lord's Supper, this expresses the fellowship that exists between the believers among themselves, but also with the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

We have part in that blood of Christ.

1 John 1:3

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

First the fellowship with one another is described, and then also that with the Lord Jesus Christ. So it is also in 1 Corinthians 10.

We take part in the Lord's Supper and thereby express our union with one another. But that union exists because we have part in that one body and in that one blood—namely in Christ Himself. That is the basis of our Christian life. One must first receive nourishment and then one can live. Not the other way round.

In short, we have part in one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread. Of course it is not that we have part in Christ because we have eaten of that bread. It is here the doctrinal exposition: If it is so that you can answer these questions with yes, then we all have part in one bread and all have part in that one Christ. We are joined to Him and live in His fellowship and sit at His table.

1 Corinthians 10:18

Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

Is there also an Israel after the spirit? Evidently so, for otherwise this expression has no point. Does that expression exist then? One does not find it in the Bible, but the expression is completely biblical. The Israel after the spirit applies to the Corinthians and also to us. Israel after the flesh is the Israel as we know it from history.

Romans 2:28

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

Romans 2:29

But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

There is therefore a Jew after the flesh, but also a Jew after the spirit. Those are of course two different things and they stand opposed to one another.

Galatians 4:29

But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

Ishmael was born after the flesh and Isaac was born after the Spirit. That line of thought is also found again in Romans 9. It is not automatic that someone born of Abraham is also his heir. That applies only to those to whom it was promised. There are two conditions: of Abraham and it must have been promised.

Isaac in this passage is a picture of the church (see Galatians 4:28). In Galatians 6:16 it is not called spiritual Israel, but the Israel of God = God's Israel. Evidently that is the designation of the church in our day.

Galatians 6:15

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Galatians 6:16

And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

What have foreskin and circumcision to do with a new creature? Well, circumcision expresses the removal of the old creation and the revealing of the glory of a new creation.

As many as walk according to this rule = that outward things have no value.

Peace and mercy are in general designations of the new covenant. Mercy is a synonym for grace. The whole epistle is about that we should not live under the old covenant, of which circumcision is the sine qua non. Circumcision is mentioned, but the whole law is meant, the whole Judaism, the Judaistic system and everything connected with it.

Our rule is that circumcision has no legal force, nor has uncircumcision, but it concerns a new creation. Circumcision is after all a picture of that.

Not as many as hold this rule to be true, but as many as walk according to this rule. We do not live from the law but from grace. Whoever walks according to that rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. Who are they then? It can only be one thing, namely the same. Those who walk according to this rule are the Israel of God. You have those who live under the law and those who walk according to this rule—and what else should the Israel of God be?

Israel is by definition the chosen people of God, the true people of God in practice, who also live accordingly. Are those not the ones who walk according to this rule? If one must search for one text for spiritual Israel, then it is this text. If one does not want that, then one must reason away this text. Some people do that. In Calvinistic circles one tends to see the church as Israel and that at the expense of Israel. One declares that Israel as such no longer has a future and that no promises made to Israel will any more be fulfilled. The promises God made to Israel have passed to the church, which is then the spiritual Israel.

Other circles say precisely that Israel has a future and that the promises made to Israel will also actually be fulfilled to Israel. They have tried to reason away the thought of a spiritual Israel because they consider that an unjust spiritualising of terms from the Bible. That is, however, going too far, for it is indeed perfectly legitimate. The church is regarded as the people of God and is therefore a legitimate bearer of the name Israel. That does not alter the fact that in the future, when the church has been removed from the earth and no longer has a domicile on earth, the place left vacant by the church will still be taken by Israel.

There therefore does indeed exist a spiritual Israel. The church is a royal priesthood. A holy and purchased people. We are that temple and therefore a priestly house and therefore legitimate bearers of the name Israel. That does not say everything, but it is still so.

Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

That is therefore the Israel of the Old Testament, but probably also still the Israel in the days of the Corinthians. Then comes another question: Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? One need not understand the question. The answer is yes.

As regards Israel after the flesh, as far as we know the majority of the believers in Corinth were of Jewish origin. They were therefore also expected to understand these things well.

There were very many different kinds of offerings. That goes much further than only the five main groups: the trespass offering, sin offering, thank offering, meal offering, and burnt offering. These were again subdivided into all sorts of categories with different regulations. Here reference is made to the fact that often part of the animals came on the altar. Usually it is also described which parts of the animal came on the altar. Another part of the sacrificial animal was in many cases eaten by the priests. Moreover, those who brought the sacrificial animal often also ate of the sacrificial animal themselves, depending on what kind of offering it was. First, therefore, a part was laid on the altar and offered to the Lord, after which a festive meal followed. The idea is that in those circumstances too one ate as it were together with the Lord from the same meal. That is why it can be said that they ate of the altar. In that way they had communion with the altar.

The Lord's Supper is no longer such a literal meal, but a ritual meal.

If you want to be filled and satisfied, you should not come to the Lord's Supper for that purpose. You do not really become full from it, and that was never the intention. It is not intended for the old man, but it is a depiction of the new man that we have become in Christ, and of the idea that the Lord cares for us and that we in turn should care for one another. The simple act of passing the bread and the wine expresses that we also care

for one another. This is dealt with more fully in the following chapters. We are members of the body of Christ, and therefore we should be hands and feet to one another, and more of that sort of imagery addressed to believers who were maintaining a rather superficial lifestyle, so that there is reason to fear they had understood nothing of it. Paul compares the Lord's Supper with the food sacrificed to idols. Moreover, he likens it to the situation under Israel according to the flesh, in which at any rate the priests, but also those who had brought the offering, ate of what had been sacrificed and thus in a sense ate from the altar. The thrust of the Scripture passage is that one obviously cannot eat from both. You serve the Lord or you serve idols.

From this Scripture portion, at least the meaning of the Lord's Supper is clear, even though it makes no attempt whatsoever to explain what that meaning is. Food and drink are a depiction of life and of fellowship. People sit at the same table and eat from the same table. That is a depiction of the fellowship they share. That is why in Greek the word for meal is the same as for a wedding. The wedding is also understood to establish or inaugurate fellowship. In the New Testament, translations sometimes speak of a wedding where we nowhere encounter a bride and often not even a bridegroom. It really ought to have been translated as "meal" in those cases.

The meaning, however, should be clear. It is also brought forward here in the form of a question.

Paul speaks as to wise men, so that the possibility remains open for the unwise that they do not know the meaning.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

Even though the bread is broken, for the figurative meaning it evidently remains one bread, so that we are all partakers of one bread. The one bread is a depiction of the one body of Christ, where bread is also a synonym for a body. A lump of material is often called a "loaf" or "bread": a bread of lead, a bread of gold, and so on. A body certainly denotes a unity, but one composed of diversity. Every unity that is composed of parts can therefore be designated as a body. This is demonstrated here as well. A body may consist of many members, yet those members together form a unity.

Having a part in one bread in connection with the Lord's Supper is a depiction of the fact that we all have a part in that one body of Christ.

Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? Is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

Obviously the answer is yes. If you think otherwise, then it is advisable to adjust your view. After all, it is often taught that the bread and the cup are an image of the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is also the only Scripture passage that gives an explanation of the Lord's Supper, albeit in the form of questions. The remarkable thing is that throughout the world a meal is a depiction of life and fellowship, except in Christianity.

In 1 Corinthians 11:23 it refers to the Lord Jesus, who in the night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. (1 Corinthians 11:24) The word "broken" is not there, and it has also been omitted in newer translations. It is not present here, nor anywhere else.

1 Corinthians 11:25

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. On the basis of at least the Epistle to the Hebrews, one would know that the Lord Jesus Himself is the Mediator of the New Covenant. He is that according to the power of an endless life, on the basis of His resurrection. That is what is referred to here: a life under the New Covenant, a life in which we share, under the motto: For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. (John 6:55) It is, however, not the life under the Old Covenant. That life was terminated at the cross. This is the life under the New Covenant, and that is eternal life.

The death of the Lord Jesus on the cross took place according to, on the basis of, and thus under the Old Covenant. The blood He shed there was blood of the Old Covenant, which was demanded by the Old Covenant of the law. Where the Lord Jesus fulfilled the function of Redeemer, He died on the basis of the law. He came under the law, to redeem those who were under the law. In His resurrection He received life, and that is the life, the blood, of the New Covenant. The wine is a depiction of that.

The toast "Lechaim!" (in Yiddish/Jewish tradition) is a curious way of toasting.

Le = to/on

Chai = life

m = plural form.

They say: To lives!

It is really only about one life, and that is how it is translated, yet they express it in the plural. That is a pluralis extensionis, a plural of extension. That means life, but then eternal life. Perhaps they mean a long life, but in any case an extended life. That is ultimately what wine represents. Not just life, but eternal life. In the Bible it certainly has that meaning. In 1 Corinthians 11 we shall go into this a little further, because certain consequences are attached to it there. Here in

1 Corinthians 10 it is only cited as an example.

Paul reasons along two lines at once. He speaks about having a part in bread and wine, about sitting at the Lord's Supper, and at the same time about the thought that in our whole life we are connected with one another and sit at the table of the Lord, where He gives us everything we need for this life. According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. (2 Peter 1:3) Even if we were not celebrating the Lord's Supper, we would sit at the table of the Lord and receive from Him what He offers us. Just look in the Old Testament for someone who sat at another's table.

Mephibosheth, for example, sat at David's table. That was certainly not just about eating. He was maintained by David and thus became part of the royal family or household (see 2 Samuel 9).

Jehoiachin was in prison in exile, but at a certain point he was taken out and then sat at the king's table (Jeremiah 52:31–34). Things like that. In the same way, we sit at His table.

The function of celebrating the Lord's Supper is that we are reminded of it: that together, as children of God, we form one body and live from the hand of the Lord. That also determines our fellowship.

That is why it is rather tragic that people want to see in the Lord's Supper a depiction of suffering and death. It is precisely the opposite. It is a depiction of our daily position.

The reason Paul cites it is that he uses it as an example for our practical life as children of God.

In other words, here too you do not find instructions regarding the celebration of the Lord's Supper, let alone its institution. It is assumed that people know it. However often it is done, it is only occasional, and it is a depiction of our position; it is in remembrance, not of someone who has died, but of the One who lives, who is our life, who is with us, who maintains and feeds us, who leads us towards our sonship in the future.

It therefore has nothing to do with death. We remember the Lord who lives, with whom we have fellowship, and with one another.

Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

Regarding eating from the altar, in Hebrews 13:10 it says...We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. (Hebrews 13:10)

We have no such altar at all. Well, in the Roman Catholic Church they have those things.

Altar = service to God.

Sometimes it is a literal object, but it is a depiction of service to God. We have such service. If those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat of the altar, this implies that we do have that right, because we do not serve the tabernacle. If all is well, we also eat from the altar. We serve the Lord, and on that basis He cares for us. He gives us all we need, on the basis that we serve Him.

Those who live under the law, under the Old Covenant, have no right (power) to eat from the altar.

Hebrews 13:9

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

It is good that the heart be established with grace. The divers and strange doctrines are therefore law, namely the opposite of grace.

The saving grace of God has appeared to all men and teaches us. That is the sound doctrine of Christ. The strange doctrine is law. It is the distinction between the Old and the New Covenant. We are repeatedly called to draw near to the throne of grace, first of all to be taught there, to listen to the words that the Lord speaks to us from that throne. It is good that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. That is a clear reference to life under the law.

Hebrews 13:11 – 12

For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

There are only two possibilities, drawn from the Day of Atonement, about which the whole epistle actually speaks. Blood was brought into the sanctuary, but the bodies of the animals were burned outside the camp. We either have a position in the sanctuary, where we draw near to the throne of grace; insofar as we are not there, because we are still here on earth in the flesh, we are outside the camp and bear reproach.

Hebrews 13:13

Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. (This also applies to the Lord Jesus: He is in the sanctuary, but as regards His position here on earth, He is outside the camp. He is still outside the gate. He only enters within the gate at His return, when He establishes His kingdom over the nations here on earth. It is sometimes taught here and there that when the Lord returns to the Mount of Olives, He will then enter Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives through the gate that can be seen from the Mount of Olives but is now walled up. That is the Jewish story, but it is not in the Bible. For even after He has set His feet on the Mount of Olives, He does not enter Jerusalem. There is also a good reason for that, because on that occasion the camp is destroyed. When He came to the Mount of Olives in the past, in a rather festive procession, He saw the city and wept over it and announced the destruction of the city. If He appears on the Mount of Olives in the future, it will be on the occasion of the destruction of Jerusalem. As far as there is then still a believing remnant, they will flee the city to the wilderness. That is the gathering place, not in Jerusalem. That city will first have to be cleansed. A period of seven months is set aside for that. Only then is the city rebuilt.

In other words, He is outside the camp and remains outside the camp, and even at His return He will not literally enter that camp.

The above is literal, but it also has a symbolic meaning. The camp is society. We do not belong there. Nor does He, and He will therefore not acquire a place in it. The beginning of His kingdom will be in the wilderness, and as regards the camp, judgment will come upon all nations, the city will be destroyed.

Our position today is exactly the same: outside the camp as far as the world is concerned, but as regards our spiritual position we are in the sanctuary, with citizenship and conversation in heaven.

The two goats on the Day of Atonement were alike. One of the two goats had to be chosen. The lot had to determine that, for there was no difference between the two goats. The one goat was slaughtered and its blood was brought to the mercy seat (throne of grace) in the sanctuary. The other goat was driven out outside the camp. Those two goats actually represent the same thing. It is one thing. The goat is then either in the sanctuary or outside the camp.

It is therefore not speaking of suffering and death, although that plays a role, but it is about the situation as it exists in our days, in which the Day of Atonement is. When we seek the Lord, we enter the sanctuary. The more we enter the sanctuary, the more we go outside the camp here. Therefore we should with boldness draw near to the throne of grace, but also go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. Both are dependent on each other. It is difficult to enter the sanctuary without going out outside the camp.

That is probably also the greatest problem within Christianity. People may want to enter the sanctuary, but then they must also go outside the camp. That proves to be much more difficult.

We should serve the Lord, not as part of society, but outside it. If there is then any society, it is that of believers among themselves. We sit at His table. The blessings we receive there are not intended for the world, nor for those who hold to the Old Covenant. It is only intended for those who respond to His invitation and come to Him in faith, but as a result also go outside the camp.

Back to 1 Corinthians 10.

Those who eat of the altar have communion with the altar.
The same therefore applies to the heathen, who also have an altar. For they serve an idol, or even several, and thus sit at the table of demons.

1 Corinthians 10:19

What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?

The answer is obviously no. That is not what he says. What he does say...But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. (1 Corinthians 10:20)

People know the idols, under various names too: Zeus, Jupiter, and whoever they all were. The question is whether that is anything. The answer is no, for Zeus is not God and Jupiter is not God. Even if Zeus were the devil himself, it would still be nothing. So are the gods of the Greeks real? No, they are not. It is nothing.

What the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons.

Devils = demons. We have no English word for that, and if we must say it in English, we simply use the Greek word. There is only one devil, the diabolos, the satanas.

These sacrifices by the Gentiles therefore in reality end up with the demons. The demons, however, are not the gods. They are not even fallen angels.

Demons are spirits, and spirits are demons; in the Bible they are evil spirits. Among the Greeks it was different, for there they could be spirits that were good or bad. In the Bible, demons and evil spirits are the same thing. The terminology is often used interchangeably. If someone was possessed by an evil spirit, then the Lord Jesus cast out the demon, or vice versa.

With people it is the same. We consider some people good and others bad. In the Bible, however, all people are bad. It is the same with demons. According to the Greeks, demons are the ones who facilitate communication between gods and men. They are messengers. People speak to the gods, but the gods themselves are not directly accessible. Therefore these demons run back and forth a bit as messengers between the gods and men, to convey messages. They are the lowest personnel, belonging to the powers of the air.

Those gods are therefore no gods, and insofar as sacrifices are offered to idols, they are offered to demons. Demons are close to matter, which is why they can also manipulate matter. In practice, all so-called sorcery is the work of demons. They are certainly not gods and are not worthy to be regarded as such, but they do exist. They are not only called evil spirits, but also seducing spirits. On the other hand, mention is also made of doctrines of demons. Those doctrines are not about demons, but are produced by demons. All those religions and the like are to a high degree inspired by demons. They gain access to man. Man is inspired by demons. Spiritists seek direct contact with the spirits. That still exists today, but because the word is so loaded, it has been replaced by spiritualism, yet it is exactly the same.

The same mistake is made over and over again. Some people see that there is an angel with them, a guide spirit. They probably do have one, but it is not an angel at all, but a demon, who appears from time to time wholly or partially and speaks of all sorts of things like that and more. People tell the most insane nonsense because it is whispered to them. Sometimes they only need to put their pen to paper and then they write all

sorts of things down. Think, for example, of the books of Madame Blavatsky. They seem to come straight from the demons and serve no other purpose than to sow confusion. The Gentiles sacrifice to demons and not to God.

Paul does not want us to have fellowship with demons. Those demons do exist. In the next Scripture passage it says that we should take no account of them. They are there, but the best thing is to ignore them; then you have the least trouble from them. They seek attention, for they are just like people. The more attention they get, the higher they present themselves.

But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. (1 Corinthians 10:20)

In the Bible, two Scripture references are given for this verse.

Leviticus 17:7

And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations.

They were to bring offerings to the Lord and to the altar of the Lord, and no more offerings to demons.

Deuteronomy 32:16 -17

They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger.

They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.

You now perhaps understand why verse 16 does not say "gods". For they sacrificed to devils (demons) and not to God. The devils are no gods. They are promoted to gods by people. Someone runs into a demon and immediately thinks they have run into a god. Such a demon rather likes that. It lets itself be flattered.

They sacrificed to gods whom they did not know, but certainly acknowledged as gods."

They sacrifice to devils, and not to God" is apparently the expression that Paul quotes in 1 Corinthians 10:20.

Deuteronomy 32:37–38

And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection.

Israel would stray from the Lord. They would abandon the Rock that had begotten them. The Rock announces that He will abandon them and hide Himself, so that they are delivered over to the gods they had chosen for themselves. Let them help you then. Of course nothing came of that, and nothing comes of it today either.

They ate from the altar of the demons. They ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings, but it availed nothing, for they are no gods and cannot help. Back to 1 Corinthians 10.

1 Corinthians 10:20

But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

In Acts 17 Paul is in Athens, and after seeing that the city is full of idols and temples, he addresses them and says: "I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious." That religiosity of the Athenians is so great that it is unsurpassed in every respect. In the word

"superstitious" (extended to that great expression), the word "God" does not appear at all.

Deisidaimon = more religious = derived from demon.

The religion of the Athenians therefore had directly to do with demons. Religion proves to be service to demons.

Spiritism and spiritualism is also simply demonism: the seeking after, the serving of, and the submission to demons. According to the Bible, they are simply personnel of the devil, the prince of the power of the air.

Corinthians 10:21

Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

Paul does not want the Corinthians to have fellowship with the demons. For they cannot serve two masters. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot have fellowship with the One and with the other. You cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils. Hopefully it is clear that this does not say you cannot partake of the Lord's Supper if you also hold to some idol or demon somewhere. What it is about is that in the practice of life you cannot be part of the body of Christ and function therein, and at the same time be part of some heathen culture or society, which in reality serves the demons, or their highest boss. The Lord's Supper and idol sacrifices set against each other are the depiction of that. It is symbolism.

The issue is not whether these Corinthians, who evidently maintained such a carnal walk of life, were allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. It is quite the opposite. Paul assumes that they celebrate the Lord's Supper. Indeed, they did so with great enthusiasm, with rather more emphasis on the meal and also on the celebration. It amounted to complete revelries. Paul does not even say that this is not allowed, but that if it is about a meal for your body, you should eat at home, for the Lord's Supper is only intended as a symbolic meal. As regards the celebration, it is rather inconsistent that people enthusiastically express these symbols of mutual fellowship and with the Lord, while on the other hand one says "I am of Paul," another "I am of Apollos," and yet another of someone else. Then in practice there is little unity to be observed.

Paul does not say that you may not partake of the Lord's Supper, but that you should stop this division and simply continue celebrating the Lord's Supper, in awareness of what its meaning is. You should not turn things upside down.

1 Corinthians 10:22

Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

Or are we challenging the Lord? The Lord says it cannot be done, but we do it anyway, as if it could. Where one lives according to worldly principles, there one does the Lord wrong. There one does not serve the Lord.

Christian liberty

1 Corinthians 10:23

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

Paul does not say that now that you do this, you may not partake of the Lord's Supper. All things are lawful, but not all things are expedient. Nor does he say that now that you

sit at the Lord's Supper, you may not do the other. Everything is allowed. If he were not to write this anywhere, it would not be to the Corinthians, but precisely to them it is said that everything is allowed. But those two things cannot go together. The one comes at the expense of the other. If you are then so focused on those outward things and thus on the celebration of the Lord's Supper, in which they evidently rather exaggerated, then you may draw the consequences from that and become aware that you also in the practice of life sit at the table of the Lord and thus form part of that great family that sits at that table. That you form part of the communion of saints. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4:3–6) It is about that unity. It exists only at the table of the Lord; everything else detracts from it.

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient.

All things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.

All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

If all things are lawful for me, then I am free. If after that you think you are obliged to do all things, then you are again under the power of them and thus not free.

We always have difficulty getting rid of law. Law is for children, but when you have become adult, as is given to a few of us, then we have difficulty getting rid of that law again. Law is only for children. When we have become adult, we make our own choices and decisions. We then bear the responsibility ourselves, and then everything is allowed, to the annoyance of all who remain immature.

The problem with that is that when we are adult we must choose ourselves and also bear the responsibility for those choices ourselves. If you do not get rid of legalistic thinking, then you have the idea that all things are obligatory. That is not the case. We should learn to make our own choices in life. That is a mark of maturity. Part of that is that you are also responsible for the choices you make. You do not need to be such a great philosopher to proclaim that freedom is fine, but only when it is accompanied by responsibility. Otherwise there is only licentiousness. Freedom does not exist unless one also bears responsibility. Even then it does not exist unless there are certain ideals. When there are things one aims at. When there is a purpose in life towards which one is heading. One is free to choose the route oneself, but choosing that route has no sense if there is no goal, for then there is no route, only wandering.

Someone said: "But you cannot just live without law!" That can be done very well, but not without purpose. You must have a goal you aim at, a goal to live for. By biblical standards, man is by definition a servant. This implies that man by definition needs something to live for, to which he can be subservient. If he does not have that, then he must have something else. What remains is often law. Then you can live for that.

Someone who prescribes that you must do this now and that now, as with recruits.

When you arrive you have no idea what it is about and where it is heading. Moreover, you are too young for it, but there is always a superior who tells you what to do. Do you have a good life like that? Yes, very easy at any rate, but you have no prospect. Some people want to live like that, even Christians. They have no idea what it is about and no idea where it should lead, but they stick to the principles and that is it.

Freedom is not mere licentiousness, but having something to live for. Where the New Testament epistles set forth so clearly and systematically that we as believers are in every respect free from law, how is it then that so few believers bear the consequences

of that and live from it? That is because they have no alternative. The alternative is namely to take responsibility upon yourself to present your life as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice to God, to aim at service to the Lord. Where you do that, you naturally lose that legalistic thinking. That is also precisely the intention, for we as children of God should bear responsibility for our life, and on that basis we should as adults be placed as sons and thus recognised by God, and on that ground receive an inheritance that is reserved for us in heaven. Whoever continues to live under the law will not inherit. That is not difficult, for it is simply stated in several places. How that works in practice? You must come to surrender to the Lord and place your trust in Him. After that you can calmly say that all things are lawful for you, but we are aware that not all things are profitable. There are therefore quite a few things we simply do not do, because they fall outside our hope and outside our purpose and expectation. The Lord sets something before us and we aim at that. What deviates from it we keep out of our lives as far as possible.

Not all things edify.

Edify is the word for building a house. Not all things build up. We should therefore preferably do things that are edifying. You could say that these are things that are constructive for the Church. That is nicely formulated, but to a high degree academic. Academic = unimportant for practice. It may be true, but you can do nothing with it. That does not build up. You can also say that you must contribute to the building up of the Church, but that is academic. It is true and also very interesting, but in practice you can do virtually nothing with it, for if it leads anywhere, it suddenly seems as if we are building up a local association by organising puzzle rides, an evening of shuffleboard, and so on. Very cosy and promoting unity. They do that in business nowadays too, but then something more expensive. Survival courses are organised or parachute jumping together. That is to build camaraderie, teambuilding.

In reality you cannot build the Church, for the Church is built by the Lord Himself. Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it. In practice and thus not academically, we do not deal with the Church as a collective, but with individual church members, with our brothers and sisters. Their building up does indeed happen through us, just as we ourselves in practice are built up by brothers and sisters. If we are built up by being taught, then that also happens mutually. Insofar as we gain life experience, that is also mutual, as brothers and sisters among themselves.

Here it is about that mutual life of believers. Not as the Church as a collective, but in connection with the individual believer.

1 Corinthians 10:24

Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

"Seek" here means to be oriented towards or focused upon. We should be oriented towards the other person.

In summary, it amounts to this: insofar as there is such a thing as meat sacrificed to idols, when it concerns ourselves, we are wiser. We know—we all have knowledge together—and therefore we take no notice of it. We do not acknowledge idols, and if something has been sacrificed to idols, too bad; we simply eat it. That is how it is when it concerns ourselves. But it is not only about ourselves; we also have to do with our brothers and sisters, who form part of the same fellowship to which we also belong. We sit with them at one and the same table. The point is that there are believers who do not

have that knowledge and who are weak. In their minds, in their hearts, and in their consciences, there is indeed room for idols. For them, these things are different. Perhaps they have only just been delivered from them when they came to faith and are trying to leave those old habits behind. Now they suddenly find themselves sitting at one table with us, and they see us eating what has been sacrificed to idols. That makes things difficult. The question then arises: what should be done in such a situation? The answer is that we then do not eat it either. We refrain, not for the sake of our own conscience, but for the sake of theirs. It troubles them, and we take account of the weaker ones. In fact, it is not so much about those who are weak, but about those who are still weak. There are also believers who were once strong but have since become weak. Whether we should take account of those believers is open to question. Nevertheless, all things are lawful for us, but what we do in practice is to occupy ourselves with the building up of the individual believer. In that connection, it is also stated here that we should not focus on ourselves, but much more on the other. As a cross-reference, 1 Corinthians 13:5 is cited, where love seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, and thinks no evil. The other Scripture passage referred to is in Philippians. There it first says that in lowliness of mind we should esteem others better than ourselves. Then...

Philippians 2:4

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. We should be oriented towards one another.

For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. (Philippians 2:21)

Our brothers and sisters—even the weak brothers and sisters—are of Jesus Christ. They are the object of His work, for the building up of the Church. We should not hinder that work. We may do all things, but when young people or children are present, we also behave a bit more properly, because that is better for their upbringing. They might misunderstand it, and so we adjust somewhat. We take the circumstances into account. The way one behaves at home is often different from when visiting someone else's home. One adapts to the circumstances.

A society can only exist if people adapt to one another. In the past, this was called etiquette. Etiquette does not concern the great matters of life (that is ethics). Etiquette is the small-scale ethics—the rather trivial rules of behaviour. These matter when we interact with one another, if only so that we do not irritate each other. If you seek your own or crave attention, you disregard etiquette for a moment. You get the attention, but it becomes a disturbing factor.

In this Scripture passage, it is not about ethics but about etiquette—really not. It belongs to the rules of life for believers. It is about respecting one another, taking one another into account, and, as far as lies in our power, living peaceably with all men and at the very least not giving offence to one another. In this present society, avoiding offence entirely is rather impossible, but one can at least make some effort in that direction.

1 Corinthians 10:25 - 26

Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake:

You do not ask whether the meat has perhaps been sacrificed to idols. You simply do not want to know. If you do know, then you have the problem again—whether you will eat it or not. You may do all things, so why create such problems for yourself? For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

This is a quotation from Exodus 19:5: "for all the earth is mine."

And from

Psalm 24:1:

The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

It all belongs to the Lord.

1 Timothy 4:4–5

Nothing is unclean in itself, unless you yourself regard it as unclean.

Uncleanness therefore does not exist, except in the heart of man.

For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

Titus 1:13–15

For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. This witness is true.

Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;

Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

Fables may be perfectly acceptable as literature, but they are lies. Where law reigns, truth is of no importance. Where law reigns, there is even an interest in truth not becoming known. There are people who, for religious reasons, claim to have no television, yet everyone knows they do, because it is hidden behind that cupboard door. People try all sorts of things to evade the rules. That must especially not leak out. It must above all remain concealed. Truth no longer plays a role. It is about keeping the rules properly—or at least appearing to do so.

The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. If you read it a few times, it almost seems as though the lie was given by Moses. That is not so, but you are not far off. Where law reigns, truth is no longer of importance.

The truth shall make us free. Free from what? From the law, of course.

How does someone become defiled? By being unbelieving. It is a matter of how one looks at it. The Jewish laws primarily concern foods that were deemed clean. In itself, no thing is unclean. It may well be that certain nutrients are reasonably bad for a person compared with others. It may also be that you have such a constitution that you cannot tolerate certain kinds of food. You may be allergic to something. Some people cannot tolerate certain nutrients. Some cannot eat strawberries, others cannot eat pork, still others cannot eat cucumber. That is true enough, but it does not mean those things are unclean in themselves. It may also be that we naturally lack so much, are so deficient, that we can no longer tolerate them.

1 Timothy 4:1–3

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

They forbid marriage—that is, they forbid sex. They forbid all carnal pleasures. Where we know the truth and have been taught in it, that truth makes us free. Then we also understand that the commandments described above are commandments of men and of demons, who have every interest in placing us under the law.

1 Timothy 4:4

For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

It is from this verse that the tradition comes of giving thanks before a meal. Idol-worshippers first dedicated the meal to demons. Instead, we thank the Lord for the meal.

1 Timothy 4:5

For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

That is to say, by our dedication to Him. Whatever it is, whatever it was, and whatever has been done with it—all of that has nothing further to do with it.

Romans 14:12

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Everyone stands or falls to his own master. One eats to the Lord, and another eats not to the Lord. That differs for each of us, but each of us is responsible for himself.

Romans 14:13

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

That is precisely what this section in 1 Corinthians 10 is about. We should not give one another offence or cause stumbling as believers. This is the guideline.

Romans 14:14

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

If we regard something as unclean, then in practice it is unclean. If we believe we must not do something and yet do it, then afterwards we have a burdened and defiled conscience. We may do all things, however, and need regard nothing as unclean. Moreover, the Lord Jesus Christ would purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14). The conscience must be purged. That is connected with the fact that we may do all things, so that our consciences are not thereby defiled. It is not about whether we may or may not do something—for we may do all things—but the intention is that we are involved in the building up of the Church. For that reason, it is sometimes desirable that we abstain from certain things, or do them, depending on the circumstances.

It is also not so much about the effect on ourselves, but on fellow believers. They may view it differently and have different experiences with it. If you are weak, it is to be hoped that those around you take some account of you. We are asked to do exactly that, for the unity of the Church is a precious thing. It has been established by God. We are expected not to detract from it and then also to contribute to that unity. We should first endeavour to keep the unity and then contribute to one another's building up.

Of course, there are then people who ask what they must abstain from or what they must do. We cannot give an answer to that, for everyone shall give account of himself to

God. You must judge it for yourself. If you cannot, then it is high time you learned to do so. Perhaps you still have much to learn doctrinally and also in the practice of your life, but that is how it is. The whole idea of so-called ecclesiastical law—whereby church organisations have their own legislation and sometimes even their own courts—developed from the notion that you cannot simply leave people to themselves, that you cannot let them decide for themselves what they should or should not do. Of course you can, but you must ensure that they are no longer foolish and ignorant. They must be taught.

John 8:31–32

If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

That is how it works. Simply through teaching in the Word of God, in the work of the Lord—who He is, what He does, how we have been given a place in it, and what the Lord generally expects of believers. To that we conform ourselves and towards that we strive. That we set as the ideal in our lives and from that we live. If someone engages in top-level sport, he must take many things into account and bring his body under subjection. He restricts himself in all sorts of areas in order to achieve the best possible performance. That is what it is about.

In any case, we should first bear responsibility for our own lives; otherwise we can achieve nothing together either.

1 Timothy 4:16

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

We are first responsible for ourselves, and where we take that responsibility for ourselves, we can also be a blessing to others. If we cannot get our own lives in order, what are others to do with that? What can we then mean to others? In the world it is often the case that those who cannot get their own lives in order therefore busy themselves with the lives of others. That is obviously not the intention and it cannot work either. After all, we have not come to faith collectively, but personally, individually. That is also a personal choice you make. Afterwards, God adds us to the body of Christ. He gives us a place in it and thus also responsibility.

Some have problems with the combination of freedom and responsibility, but the Bible teaches that we have been made free so that we can bear our own responsibility and make our own choices in all that we do and refrain from doing—so that the law does not prescribe it and the responsibility does not lie elsewhere with the lawgiver, but with ourselves. We stand in freedom, but in that freedom we are expected to serve God and to be involved in the work of the Lord. That work obviously concerns the Church. We should take our place within it and not merely seek our own things, but also those of others.

1 Corinthians 10:27

If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.

This is pitched at the low level of the Corinthians. If you are invited by an unbeliever, just eat with them. Do not make difficulties.

1 Corinthians 10:28

But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:

It makes no difference to us, but you could cause other people problems by it. As a Christian you are not expected to serve idols. If something sacrificed to idols is set before you and you accept it, then you have a problem—or else the other person does, for of course people think about it. Do not eat it for the sake of the other person. And only for that reason.

Paul may say all this, but that is simply how life works. It is a matter of courtesy. You can think of these things yourself. When you are in your own home, you have your own rules; when you are in someone else's home, their house rules apply. Under the circumstances, it is desirable to take others into account so that their conscience is not defiled.

1 Corinthians 10:29

Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?

We who are strong have the responsibility—we are debtors—to bear the infirmities of the weak. Different rules apply to the weak than to the strong. The weak must be strengthened. We do not therefore make things unnecessarily hard for them.

Rule 1 is: we are free;

Rule 2 is: we take others into account.

Of course, the intention is that the one who is weak becomes strong. With such weak ones, such as children, we do take account. There are also believers who were once strong but have become weak. In Christianity there is a trend that believers must continually be brought under a yoke. Guilt feelings are impressed upon them, whereby their consciences become burdened and they are thus brought under the power of others. In this way those who once stood in freedom lose their freedom again. They have gone from strong to weak. Should we take account of these believers? If we do, we drag the whole thing down. The standard among believers is lowered. If we do not hold fast to the freedom in which we stand, we shall soon lose it, because it is continually being nibbled away from all sides. We must do this, we must do that, we may not do this, we may not do that—because we are children of God. Indeed, we are children of God and placed in freedom. We may do all things. That, however, is not obligatory. In our freedom the intention is that we choose in that freedom to serve the Lord. That imposes limitations upon us through circumstances, but that is true of everything. If you choose to do one thing, you become restricted in others. That is what being free means—namely, bearing responsibility.

1 Corinthians 10:30

For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?

Whatever happens to you in life, and in any case whatever you receive in life, give thanks to the Lord for it. No one can judge you for that. If you receive all things as from the hand of the Lord, then there is nothing wrong with it. Whatever its origin, it makes no difference. We take no notice of that. We receive it from the hand of the Lord, for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. (1

Corinthians 10:31

If you think you cannot do that with certain things, then you had better leave them alone, for otherwise it will give you a burdened conscience.

In life you can do whatever you do to the glory of God. It only requires a change of mind.

If you were accustomed to living under the law, or even if you were accustomed to serving idols—whatsoever we do, we should do it to the glory of God. The main rule is...

1 Corinthians 10:32

Give none offence

Unfortunately, among the Jews and the Greeks and the church of God you find many people inclined to take offence. That makes it difficult. Some take offence even when we have not given it. Some are always looking for something to criticise in others. Some people are always looking to be offended, so that they can protest against it. With all our sincere intentions, we can do nothing about that. Nevertheless, we are told: Give none offence. We should therefore take care in that regard. It is not the intention that we cause others to stumble.

Jews, Greeks, and the church of God. These are three different ways of life. They are three different cultures: the Jewish, the Greek, and also that of the church. The way of life of believers is characterised by the fact that all those believers stand in freedom and at least attempt to bear their own responsibilities. That only works if people respect one another and allow one another that freedom.

In the church you find a beautiful harmony between individualism on the one hand and socialism on the other—not in the political sense of the term, but in the philosophical. Man is on the one hand an individual, but on the other hand forms part of a community in which he has and develops his identity. The believer stands in an individual relationship with the Lord, and in that situation he forms part of the collective.

That is also the problem with Christian organisations. There is a tendency to promote the mutual bond, but often that comes at the expense of the individual relationship that we have with our Lord and Saviour, who has given us a course to run. Others should not interfere in that. Of course you can talk about it sometimes, but the responsibility lies with the individual believer. You cannot later stand before the Lord and say that you did not run the course because the brothers and sisters thought it should be done differently. Take heed to yourself, and from that position we should make our contribution in that body of Christ. The teaching in the Word of God and all Christian work should be directed towards the forming of the individual believer, so that he may grow up to be spiritually mature, to someone who knows how to bear and take responsibility. That sounds very idealistic, and it is. But they are ideals that are reasonably attainable, because they are in accordance with the will of God.

We should therefore give none offence. Of course it is also true that people take offence at the preaching of the Word of God, both among the Jews and among the Greeks and among the church of God. Nevertheless, we should continue to proclaim that Word.

Paul is here speaking about the way of life that finds its fullest expression in the meal. The meal is thereby the expression of practical life.

1 Corinthians 10:33

Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

Paul always adapted himself to others. One should focus on serving the Lord, and that naturally brings limitations with it. Paul did this for the benefit of the church, that those others might be saved.

Women in the Church

1 Corinthians 11:1

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

Elsewhere it says:

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. (Ephesians 5:1–2)

He gave Himself for us and thereby offered Himself. That means He devoted Himself to the service of God. That was a sweetsmelling savour to God.

A very fundamental truth is brought forward here, for it says: Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us. It does not say here that the Lord Jesus gave Himself for sinners, or for the world, but that He gave Himself for us—for believers. This brings us again to a point of tension in theological tradition. People often have no eye for the distinction between the work that the Lord Jesus accomplished in the past and the work that He does now. Both things are of course taught in Scripture.

What He accomplished in the past was for sinners. What He does now is for the children of God. He now does only a work for the church. That is a limitation. The saving grace of God has appeared to all men and teaches us (Titus 2:11–12), but we are not all men.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Whosoever believeth in him is not the whole world. That is only a limited group. What He accomplished in the past was for all, but what He does in our days is not for all, but only for believers. That is only for the elect, but by using that term it suddenly becomes much more difficult again.

In the Netherlands people once fell into bitter dispute over whether the work of the Lord was for all people or only for the elect. That question cannot be answered unless you first ask about which work is meant. That He came into the world and suffered and died was for all people. That was for the unrighteous, for sinners, for the powerless, for the ungodly, for the evil, for enemies (Romans 5 from verse 6 onwards). In short, for all, for if one died for all, then were all dead (2 Corinthians 5:15). Where that work was for all people, the question can be asked: what does He now do for us, now that we are no longer powerless, no longer unrighteous, and so on?

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (Romans 5:10)

By His life, by His active life, by His work, we are saved from this present evil age and He places us in the light. He saves us from the wrath of God that is revealed over the whole world, and so on. In short, these are two different things.

For the sake of good order: when He suffered and died on the cross at Golgotha, He was not a High Priest. He had never been one and could not be one, because He was not of the tribe of Levi. Since His resurrection, however, He is the High Priest of His people, of the church. That has been lost sight of, but the Bible speaks of it.

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. (Ephesians 5:1–2)

The word "given" carries within it the sense of "limiting to". It is sometimes translated as "taken captive". It is a restriction of His activities. He gave Himself for us. What He now does for us, He does out of love for us. What then does He now do for the church?

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, (Ephesians 5:25–26)

Christ cleanses His church. If anyone ever asks why, if Christ is the Messiah, He has no kingdom on earth, the answer is that He now limits Himself to a work for the church. To that He has given Himself. That does not refer to His crucifixion, but to His present work for the church. You must know the distinction.

The tragedy is that people have always been inclined to explain away statements about the present work of Christ by referring them to the work He completed in the past. That is a doctrinal error, and from it arises the practical problem that people no longer know what the Lord is doing today.

Christ therefore loved the church and gave Himself for the church. We should follow that example.

1 Corinthians 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

Paul sets himself forth in many places in Scripture as an example to believers. That is also his function in his ministry and manner of life. Paul has also given himself up for a work in the church. He is not out to give offence, but to educate, so that believers may grow up in Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:2

Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

How could you be a follower of Paul if you do not think of him? If all is well, they have Paul as an example, but of course first and foremost Christ.

"Ordinances" may be a synonym for law, but if so, that is not a very favourable translation.

Paradosis = not necessarily laws, but rather traditions. That which is handed down in doses, in portions.

Tradition is related to the English "trade" = commerce; that which passes from hand to hand. Possibly even that which passes from generation to generation. These are not fixed laws, but certain matters from practical life which we learn from a preceding generation. Tradition, therefore.

There is in itself nothing wrong with tradition, provided the good things are passed on.

That it concerns traditions appears from the rest of the sentence: as I delivered them to you. Paul has delivered those ordinances. He has handed down those ways of doing things.

You also find it in verse 23: For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus...

They are things that are handed down. We do not in fact find the celebration of the Lord's Supper as a precept, not as a law. We do speak of the institution of the holy supper, but you do not find such terms in the Bible about it. That is what we call it. If you ask where and when it was instituted, then we get a roundabout answer and people say it happened on the night when the Lord Jesus was betrayed and said: "This do in remembrance of me." Very well, they did it that evening, but where does it say that we must do it now too? It says nowhere. Why do we do it then? Because it is tradition and a very old one. People have done it that way from that time onward. If you ask how one ought to celebrate the Lord's Supper, that too is nowhere stated. We do it as it has been handed down to us.

This sort of thing was debated in the time of the Reformation, when the Roman Catholic Church claimed that since they were the oldest denomination in the world and thus the only true one, we as believers must hold to the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. The problem is that it contains quite a lot of traditions which are in the first place laws and in the second place completely un-biblical. But with traditions as such there is nothing wrong. We can learn a great deal from the behaviour and customs of the early Christian church, insofar as we can still trace them.

From that we know, for example, the tradition of Sunday observance. The Roman Empire declared that day a free day, but they did so because the Christians always gathered on that day and specifically devoted it to the Lord as the first day of the week. Must we? No indeed, that is nowhere in the Bible. We just find in the Bible that people evidently used to do it that way. Why they did it you find nowhere. You can only surmise that they did it because the Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week. As the first day of the week it is a figure that something new has come into being, such as the New Covenant and a new creation. That is why the resurrection was of course also on a first day of the week. As an institution or as a law you cannot find it in the Bible. Yet it is a Christian tradition and a reasonably good one.

Traditions sometimes arose in quite different cultures and times and are in these days completely out of place, such as for example the ladies' hat. Of course that is a good tradition spoken of here, especially because of its symbolic meaning, but in our present culture as a tradition it is completely out of place and thereby loses its power and meaning.

We should realise that in connection with our Christian life and church life, we have to do with traditions, of which no one can say whether they are biblical or not. But when in our own life we give expression to the fact that we are believers, also collectively, then we do so according to the examples we have. If those examples are ones we do not like for whatever reason, then we do not do it that way. Yet nonetheless, traditions.

Where in the Bible, for example, does it say that we must sing before the start of every gathering? Nowhere. You can show that they sometimes did it that way, or that it was prescribed under the law, but we do not live under the law. Yet we do it, because we find it useful. Singing is an expression of fellowship with one another and it directs the noses the same way. It is not called unison singing for nothing. It has a certain usefulness, regardless of what you sing. It is therefore not required and nowhere prescribed, but we do it anyway. That applies to many more things.

Tradition is a good thing, certainly where we have no prescriptions at all. We stand in liberty, but we need not reinvent the wheel every generation either. If that experience exists, why not make use of it? That is how it works, and that is what Paul appeals to here. It even goes so far that in 1 Corinthians 15 he ranks the preaching and the content of the preaching under tradition. It comes from the Bible and that is also the only basis for it, yet nonetheless, when we occupy ourselves with the preaching of the word of God, we also realise that we are not the first to do so and that generations before us preached the gospel with exactly the same Bible. It is therefore indeed also tradition.

1 Corinthians 15:1

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received...

It is a matter of handing down. You do not have it from yourself. We do not have it from ourselves either. We receive it and hand it on, and that is simply called tradition. It passes from hand to hand, from generation to generation.

That does not say everything. The same thing also comes up in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, where the ministry of Timothy and Titus comes from Paul. That means that that ministry too rests on tradition. It is continually handed down. That is also the meaning of the laying on of hands. It is the handing on of certain responsibilities from one to another, from one generation to the next. That too is tradition.

Back to 1 Corinthians 11.

1 Corinthians 11:3

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

There is indeed such a thing as hierarchy. One is the head of another. There are different levels in society, but in practice also in the church and in creation, whereby some people bear certain responsibilities and others do not.

God is the head of Christ. That was abolished in AD 325 at the Council of Nicaea. There they determined that God and Christ are identical, of the same substance. That is not so, for the Father is above the Son. In John 5 it says that the Son is subject to the Father. God is the head of Christ. That can be no other way, for Christ was made Christ by God. He was not that at first, but later, after His resurrection, He was. That happened from on high.

Charlemagne was to be crowned emperor by the pope, for the church had great worldly power. The story goes that Charlemagne snatched the crown from the pope's hands and placed it on his own head. Thereby he acknowledged no authority of that pope above him. If he had let himself be crowned by the pope, he would in fact have been subject to the pope all his life.

God is therefore the head of Christ. He is the High Priest of the New Covenant. Also in that capacity He has been appointed by God and serves God. He is a minister of the New Covenant and thus subject to God.

Christ is the head of every man. Every man stands under the authority and leadership of Christ. We serve Him.

The man is the head of the woman. This is of course not about a level in society whereby men have a higher position than women, but about the individual man and his wife. This is a creation order. That word is not in the Bible, but that is what it is. This is not a principle in Christianity, but in the whole world. That God is the head of Christ and Christ serves God, we of course do not interfere in that. That is a matter between God and Christ and does not concern us further. Apart from that we would probably not understand much of it anyway.

Christ is the head of every man. How every man sees and fulfils that and what practical consequences it has is a matter between the individual man and Christ. The men at any rate stand under Christ and are therefore expected to serve Him. In what way is different for each of us. It depends on what gifts he has received and what course has been set before him. We should prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God for us personally. We do that by first being transformed in our thinking and presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God (Romans 12:1–2). The man is the head of the woman, which logically brings us to the conclusion that if the man is subject to Christ and ought to serve Christ, and the woman is subject to her husband, she is therefore expected to serve her husband. Just as we men expect of Christ that He will also care for us and supply our need, so the woman may expect of her husband that he will also care for her and provide her with what is necessary.

Those words are found in the civil code, but there they are applied to both spouses, for although we know the difference between man and woman well enough from our puberty, we are expected to forget that difference as quickly as possible. Incidentally, one must no longer say this just like that, for this is discrimination on the ground of sex. In the Netherlands since the 1960s all hierarchy in society has been abolished. Yet one cannot escape that for example people in government hold a higher rank in society than we do. They are expected to govern us and in that capacity stand above us. Yet there is no longer any respect at all for people who are higher in rank. We have abolished that. Even the royal house no longer means anything. The king's authority has been minimised to cutting ribbons and that sort of ceremonial acts. Nevertheless, it is a biblical principle that someone by birth and descent ends up somewhere in this world and thereby bears much or little responsibility, determined on the ground of descent and thus aptitude (genetically determined) and, if things go well, confirmed by upbringing.

It is not our intention to occupy ourselves with politics, but we should have an eye for the fact that as human beings we simply bear certain responsibilities, but also that we bear certain responsibilities not at all. It depends on what place we occupy. That is determined howsoever—though not exclusively—by descent and thereby by aptitude. What is wrong with a royal house in which people are born who from youth are accustomed to the idea that they will bear great responsibilities in the kingdom? They are trained for that from youth and are thus, as we may assume, well equipped to fulfil their task. It is much harder to understand that someone of low birth falls upward (usually through lack of weight) and for example becomes prime minister. Such a person has a heavy course to run along the way. He will have to learn much and will probably never become as good as someone who from childhood was destined for it and never knew better than that he would one day come to it and must see to it that he equips himself for it. That has been a valid principle up to the French Revolution.

At any rate we as children of God should know these principles. In a rather anarchistic society like that of the Corinthians it is important that the apostle says this. Before he speaks about certain matters concerning society he points out that there is a certain order, a certain authority and responsibility. Christ is responsible for everything He does and He does it in the service of God. He must give account to God. We men must give account to the Lord, whom we serve and to whom we are subject. For women it applies that they stand under their own husband. The woman is subject to her husband. It is by the way an idiotic situation that if you have a legal person with two persons and a vote must be taken democratically, it never turns out well. Then the votes are tied. But in politics when the vote is equal, there are new elections. In a marriage it does not go like that. Then it is no against no. Hence from antiquity the man was the head of the household. That men have abused that, yes, but you can probably think of nothing that has never been abused. Now man and woman are equal and women abuse that. Of course, then you still have it, but it changes nothing about the principles. If you want rest in your life, want to know who you are and where your responsibility lies, then you must first know this order. Each of us has someone above him and each of us also has people under him for whom he is responsible. These are the first things we should learn. If you have accepted that, then it becomes a little easier afterwards to give content to it. The trouble is that a great deal of trouble in this world is caused by power struggles. People want to rise higher. That is the curse of society. Everyone wants to climb just as high on the ladder of their social career until they reach the level of incompetence, where they will then spend the rest of their career in complete incompetence. But if that competence or power is determined beforehand, one can simply do one's actual work instead of only being occupied with fighting for one's position. That makes it a great deal easier and more orderly and removes a lot of tensions. That we must learn. The following chapters speak about that. The rest of the epistle is about how we as children of God simply occupy a position within a whole, in which we should be conscious of the responsibility we have and cherish no thoughts higher than those that befit us.

The Western world has developed a philosophy in which all people are supposed to be equal—which, thank God, they are not. Just imagine if everyone looked like... That is simply not the case. We all have our own preferences, our sympathies and antipathies. Not all people are equal, and they do not all have equal rights either. If someone is coming from the right, you must give them right of way. They have a right to that. Not all people have equal rights. It is true that when the situation is reversed, the rights are also reversed.

The idea that everyone is equal and has equal rights was devised as a kind of ideal. It is, however, completely unattainable. People are far too different for that—not only outwardly, but obviously inwardly as well. Because of those differences there is such a thing as rank and order. That has always been so, from the very first page of the Bible, and it plays an important role, for it is precisely on that difference that the privileged position of Israel as the chosen people actually rests. That people was taken out from among the other nations. The Lord took that people to Himself as His possession. He could do that, for the whole earth is His, and He therefore has the right and the power to single out one people from all those nations and give it a higher position in the hierarchy, whereby Israel was set as a royal and priestly people. Both the royal and the priestly stand above the rest of the people. It has authority and power and thereby also bears

greater responsibilities. That does not alter the fact that according to biblical standards kings and priests in turn stand under God Himself, who after all appointed them. It is true that such principles have got completely out of hand in some cultures, but if you abolish those principles, things also get completely out of hand. That is the problem we are saddled with today, for since all people in the Netherlands are equal, naturally no one any longer has any authority. There is no one left who can cut the knot and say: "And so it shall be!" In that way a country becomes ungovernable. The same applies just as much at a lower level. Somehow or other there must still be such a thing as hierarchy, that one stands above another. That authority simply has to exist. If there is anywhere one can talk about it, it is in the army. You cannot send a bunch of soldiers into the field and say: "See what you can make of it." Tasks must be divided and there must be coordination. That is simply how life is put together. Our society too. That so little comes of it is because no one any longer has any authority. The people who might be capable of exercising that power take good care to avoid it, because afterwards they are finished off. If they give orders and they do not turn out well, or people do not want to carry them out, then all hell breaks loose afterwards and you are torn to pieces. Everyone who bears responsibility in our society runs the risk that his head will be chopped off. That is so because the principle is no longer acknowledged. A society cannot exist that way. In practice it works so that the one with the biggest mouth, or with the most money, calls the tune.

These are things we no longer know, and that makes it difficult to speak about them—especially when it concerns the relationship between man and woman in marriage. That was never a sensitive subject, but it has become one now. Formerly men were the head of the family, but nowadays the family is beheaded, for it no longer has a head. Who is legally responsible for the children, no one knows. Children often do not know themselves either. That must somehow get out of hand. You must be able to point to someone who is responsible. Everyone does what is right in his own eyes and just hopes it turns out well.

In the New Testament there are indeed a number of Scripture passages in which these hierarchical relationships are applied to us. If we have properly understood our position in Christ, then we have also understood that God no longer sees us as an old creation but as a new creation. We are expected to have been drawn, or to be drawn, out of this present evil world, that we have citizenship in heaven. Moreover we are expected to have died to the world and to the law. These matters are quite often used as an excuse not to have to adapt to the circumstances in the world and also not to bear any responsibility there at all, under the motto: "It is not my world, I do not belong to it" and "we are not under the law." That is a fatal misunderstanding, for the Bible itself says that we should indeed be subject to the human authorities.

Romans 13:1

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

The soul is the practical walk of man, that with which he fills his life and in practice therefore is his life.

The above verses nevertheless make clear that the authorities are an institution given by God. This does not mean that God determined the outcome of the last election, nor that

those who sit in government have been appointed by God. That is not stated here either. Here it says that the authorities are a divine institution. In the Bible people are appointed to a position of rule over other people. We find this at any rate after Noah's flood, where there is explicit mention of the institution of human government. This also implies that no government has been instituted over the whole of mankind. That would incidentally be contrary to the situation immediately after the flood, with the building of the tower of Babel and the subsequent confusion of tongues. Mankind was then divided into different nations each with their own government, their own rule and in principle their own king, or whatever you call such a one. From of old those nations are also named after the head of their family, a concept that no longer exists today, but from of old that was an existing concept. The heads of the tribes of Israel were the chief heads of the tribes, of the families. When such a family grows into a whole people, then such a head suddenly becomes a king. That is also where the concept of hereditary monarchy comes from. Since David the head of the tribe of Judah was also appointed head of all Israel.

We too consider ourselves a people and a country, and if there are no question marks about that, then we also have a government. That is completely biblical. That is also how it should be. Whoever we are, we are expected to be subject to that government. It never says obedient, for one must obey God rather than men. Nowhere does it say that we must simply obey the government without question. We have obligations to Someone who is higher than our national government. Nevertheless the principle remains that one is subject to the government. You should therefore also bear the consequences if you are not obedient to the government.

Should the idea that you are the property of Christ lead you to think that you therefore no longer have any obligations to the human authorities, then Titus 3:1 says...

Titus 3:1

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

"Them" is italicised. It therefore does not say that they must obey them, but that they must be obedient to the authorities—but to the Lord. That appears, for immediately afterwards it says that they should be ready to every good work. All works that are good in the Bible are works of faith and have the glory of God as their goal. Works that proceed from faith in principle have nothing to do with our subjection to earthly authorities. Those are two different things. Yet subject to the authorities. That order simply continues to exist.

1 Peter 2:13

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

We should be fairly exemplary subjects of the land and the people of which we form part. Moreover, according to biblical standards we as children of God here on earth, wherever we are, are foreigners. We are in any case in a strange land. We should therefore behave in accordance with the rules that simply apply in that strange land—unless those rules conflict with the responsibilities we have as citizens of heaven.

There is nothing difficult about that. The difficulty lies in the fact that we have long since abolished that in our culture. Nowadays we know ceremonial kingship. The king has nothing more to say. Moreover people have turned governing the country into the idea that the government must serve the people. That is the upside-down world. The people should serve the government and the government serves God. If the government does not serve God, that is not our responsibility. It is our responsibility that we serve the government. Under all circumstances, however, it applies that one must obey God rather than men. It is also not for nothing that the word for king in Hebrew, the original language of the Bible, is the same as the word for angel, a messenger.

Malach = angel;

Melech = king.

They are the same letters and the meaning is also exactly the same.

Just as angels are ministering spirits sent by God for the sake of those who shall inherit salvation, so it applies to kings as well. They exist to serve God. Their service would indeed also have a positive effect on the people over whom they are appointed, but they stand in the service of God. They are king by the grace of God. Appointed by God, but not to cut ribbons.

Although those principles have been abolished in our society, they still exist for us and are therefore fixed norms for us, for the responsibility we have in this old world remains the same responsibility when we are children of God. As long as we are in this world and form part of it, we should know our position in it.

1 Timothy 2:1

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

Not that it might be for the blessing of the world or of society, but that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life. The world currently lies outside the sphere of the Lord's working. His work now is that He is gathering a people for His name out of this world. We have an interest in there being some rest in society, for that gives us room to lead a quiet and peaceable life, to serve the Lord in the liberty that then exists.

Liberty is a fine thing, but when it is coupled with equality and fraternity, then you have gone a bridge too far.

Christ gave Himself for us, to sanctify to Himself a people of His own.

Ephesians 5:2

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

What then about that people for His name? Paul says in Titus that those who form part of that people should also be subject to the human authorities. That is actually stated here too, but then on a different level.

Ephesians 5:20

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Here it concerns an order, not in the world but in the church. We should be subject to one another in the fear of God. On occasion it also says that one should esteem another

better than oneself. That is reciprocal. But being subject to one another does not work in the same way, for if I am subject to you and you to me, then nothing comes of it at all—unless one of us waters the wine. The question must therefore be who is subject to whom. The rest of Ephesians 5 and the first half of chapter 6 deal with that.

Ephesians 5:22

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.²⁵

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

This of course does not speak of social relationships but of relationships within marriage, whereby the man is the head of the woman.

Ephesians 6:1

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

To honour is to honour, and honour has to do with honorarium. If you honour someone, you would give him something.

Some are worthy of double honour and you would therefore give them double. That is biblical. Honouring is not merely something like respect, but it is a concrete matter. Children should obey their parents. That must be so too, for children cannot oversee things and are expected to be children because they cannot bear responsibility. That is precisely the reason they stand under the authority of parents. Children are also not reckoned separately but form part of the parents, who are then also responsible. That is why the children of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram also went down into the ground with them (Numbers 16).

In 1 Corinthians 7 it stood that the children are blessed with the parents. That is because they are not reckoned or counted separately. They are not expected to be people but children. They must still become people, and the authority of parents is directed to that, if all is well.

Children, obey your parents, for that is right. You see that it is a legal matter. In the Netherlands parents generally have so little authority over the children that they can no longer be enforced very early on. That is why the age of majority has been lowered to 18 years. That is how the problem is solved. That is called putting the cart before the horse.

Ephesians 6:5

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

Servants = slaves. But here it is simply about employment relationships. In labour too there simply has to be a boss and staff.

Singleness of your heart = without ulterior motives.

Regardless of whether those masters according to the flesh are believers or not, you should serve them just as if you were serving Christ. You should be subject or obedient to them as if you were obedient or subject to Christ. That is the will of God. That is also stated.

Ephesians 6:6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;⁷ With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

Insofar as we are employees, we should be obedient to our masters according to the flesh as though we were serving the Lord thereby, and so we also serve the Lord. We shall also be rewarded for that.

Colossians 3:22

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye We shall be rewarded by the Lord for such faithfulness and service. That this is not common practice in the world may well be so, but we are simply different people. We are the property of the Lord, and the Lord says that we should live in this way. We are rewarded for it.

The Lord therefore emphatically maintains these social relationships. If anyone were to take these biblical ordinances to heart at all, it should be us. If anyone should be subject to the authorities, it should be us as children of God.

And if any woman should be subject to her husband, it should be believing women. But yes, we have abolished that too. Formally and ceremonially marriage still exists, but in reality it has of course long since been abolished. It no longer exists. There is no longer a head in marriage. Moreover, one may no longer even make a distinction between man and woman, otherwise one discriminates. Nowadays a cohabitation between two women or two men is also a marriage. We have not yet had all the forms, but let us leave it at that in the list for now.

Moreover, husband and wife should be one and thus also form an economic unit, with one common income. Formerly the man provided for that, but nowadays husband and wife are taxed independently of each other by the tax authorities. Formerly husband and wife were not only regarded as an economic unit, but completely as one legal person, as a family with the man as head. That was abolished long ago by granting women the vote. Nowadays it is quite normal in a democracy for women to have the vote, but that is not so normal. It was never so. Since 1917 that has been abolished, and since then man and woman are therefore no longer one, but two. In reality this simply means that marriage is no longer recognised. The consequence is that nowadays people pay no more attention to it. Formerly one married and then lived together; nowadays it must be the other way round. Whether one marries afterwards no longer matters much.

You understand that in this situation it is difficult to speak about these things, but they are nonetheless biblical. It is just as biblical as that Christ is the Head of the church, but in Rome we have someone sitting who lets himself be called papa. That God is the Head of Christ was abolished much longer ago. So, and now the story comes full circle. Over time people have systematically undermined these principles. All this naturally comes from the devil himself, who no longer acknowledges the headship of God and wants to take that place himself. Why should God be the Boss? I may be lesser, but I will set my throne above that of God. That works out in the history of mankind. In the history of Israel too, incidentally.

God had appointed Moses king over the people (Deuteronomy 33:5). He functioned as the supreme ruler among Israel. His brother had been appointed high priest. Then the people call into question the position of Moses and Aaron and ask why they are set over them. Forty years earlier, when Moses first presented himself to his people as their deliverer, they already said to him: "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" That

remained so throughout that journey through the wilderness. They did not agree with God, because they were democratic and would choose one from among themselves. But that was not the intention, and that has to do with institutions that God Himself established. If anything went wrong in that, He was perfectly able to intervene in it. He did so on occasion. So it is among us as the church too. If things threaten to get completely out of hand, the Lord will intervene. We probably also have the Reformation to thank for that.

It is expected of us that we not only acknowledge these completely biblical principles doctrinally and theoretically, but that we also practise them in our daily life.

Back to 1 Corinthians 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

We know in the Bible yet another hierarchy: God is the Head of Christ, Christ is the Head of the church, the church is the head of Israel, and Israel is the head of the nations. That is the final situation in the thousand years, whereby Israel as a royal and priestly people will be set above the other nations, and whereby the church will be in a heavenly position as firstfruits out of Israel. At the head of the church stands of course Christ again, and above Christ stands God.

This also has everything to do with the birthright, for hierarchy rests on inheritance right. This applies not only in the Bible, but outside it too. Birthright is not exclusively a biblical concept.

From that hierarchy mentioned here it says...

1 Corinthians 11:4

Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.

The line of thought continues in verse 7. Verses 5 and 6 are a parenthesis. That means they stand more or less in brackets.

A parenthesis is the loose insertion of a thought into the sentence structure, for addition or clarification of the thought. This usage stems from colloquial Latin (so-called vulgar Latin), of which it can also suggest liveliness in a literary text. Such an insertion is often placed in parentheses in writings, which are also called parentheses to distinguish them from square brackets

Now once more.

Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.

For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

If the man prays or prophesies he should not cover his head. In a position or activity in relation to God the man should not cover his head. Now in our days that is absolutely no problem, for most men wear no head covering anyway. The idea is of course derived from Jewish tradition and to a lesser extent from Greek culture of those days. The Jews precisely cover the head when they do something in relation to the Godhead—at least with a kippah. That must be so because of the symbolism. Symbolism is not merely a biblical matter, for the human world is full of it. The head covering is the figure of the authority under which one stands. Quite neutrally it is the figure that the man stands under an authority.

Formerly as a soldier you were also absolutely not allowed to appear without head covering, as a figure that you stood under military discipline. If you had a slightly higher rank, you also had a higher cap.

Caps, incidentally, serve to make one appear taller and thus to impress. One also recognises the rank of the soldier by the head covering.

Nevertheless, the head covering stands for the authority one represents and also gives the one wearing such a cap the necessary authority.

The Jewish kippah is the figure of the law. One stands under the law. Literally one stands under that head covering. Hence for us, who live under the New Covenant (assuming for convenience that we were Jews), it is now the other way round. If we had a head covering at all, we take it off when we draw near to the Lord. It also says that the head covering is an authority

1 Corinthians 11:10

For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.

But it is a little hat, a head covering. It is called power because it is a figure of it. The idea is that the married woman stands under the power and authority of her husband. After that it need not surprise us that where this authority has been abolished in our culture, the head covering has also disappeared, whereby the symbolism goes hand in hand with the changed views.

That the man should therefore take off his head covering is to express the authority under which he stands. We men do not stand under that authority; we stand under Christ. We know Him face to face. The continuation of this chapter is actually

2 Corinthians 3, where it speaks of the covering that lies over the eyes and heart of the unbelieving Jew, or over the Bible. That covering is there because of the dominion of the law. Moses is cited as an example, with a covering over his face. The chapter ends with that we know the Lord face to face, that is to say, with unveiled face.

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Unfortunately translated as: beholding as in a glass.

The verb is the word “mirror.” That does not mean looking in a mirror, but what the mirror itself does: reflect. We reflect the glory of the Lord. For we receive it, because we, in contrast to Moses, do not have that covering. For we do not live under the law. The following verses say that we have cast off these shameful coverings. It is shameful to have that covering.

Now this passage does not literally concern the man’s head covering, but it certainly does concern its meaning. In 1 Corinthians 11 it is about a literal head covering and only afterwards about its spiritual meaning. We do not live under worldly principles and we do not live under the law, and therefore the man’s head covering comes off.

The logical question then is of course whether this must also apply to women. And there we tread on rather thin ice, because we then say that this must be discussed in the light of the culture and customs of that time, when it was unthinkable for a woman ever to appear in public without a head covering.

Nowadays one can see it with Muslim women. They stand under law and under the authority of their husband. They therefore wear a head covering.

The prevailing practice then was also that men did not appear in public without a head covering, but that was not compulsory. But when one consciously enters into relation with the Lord, then the man's head covering should come off.

As regards women the situation is rather different for a number of reasons. A woman without a head covering brings shame upon herself. Then she is considered of light morals. Moreover Paul says that if a woman takes off her head covering, she should also have her hair shorn, but where that happens it is a public disgrace. For from of old that happened with adulterous women. The idea is therefore that a woman should be as covered as possible in public.

1 Corinthians 11:5 -6

But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

11:6

For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

The woman should therefore keep her head covering on. Moreover, the woman's head covering is a figure of the authority of her husband under which she stands. If women dislike that, then they take off their head covering. That is probably why the little hats disappeared.

What this passage is about is that the head covering has disappeared. Please do not turn it round. Do not say that 1 Corinthians 11 teaches that women must put on a head covering, for that is not stated. It says that they should not take it off. If you want to put that into practice as a woman, then it means that you never again leave the house without a head covering. Indeed, just like Muslim women. If you accept that women do not need a head covering when they go out, fine, but then you must also not be hypocritical and suddenly put on a little hat when you enter the church. If you do that, then you are actually doing exactly the opposite of what this passage teaches. The essence is namely that the head covering has disappeared and that we should know the Lord face to face.

As regards the further hierarchy, that is not stated in this passage, but the idea certainly remains that the responsibility of the Christian woman is that she serves her husband and is subject to him.

1 Corinthians 11:7 - 8

For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.⁹ Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

This does not concern birth, but the first woman. The woman is of the man. The man was first and therefore has primogeniture = birthright. Moreover the man was not created for the woman, but the other way round. The woman was created for the man. God saw that it was not good for the man to be alone and He made a help meet for him. That means the woman was created to help the man, from which we also conclude that the man evidently needs help.

That the woman was created for the man obviously means that she was created for the sake of the man, but one can also take it literally. In Jeremiah 31 it says that God would create something new, namely the woman would compass the man, surround him. In Jeremiah 31 it is admittedly not literally about man and woman, but about something much higher and therefore much more important.

Jeremiah 31:22

How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.

The Man is the Lord and the woman is Israel. This concerns the New Covenant, for under the Old Covenant there was indeed the Man and the woman, namely the Lord and Israel (it was a marriage covenant), but under the New Covenant (and thus actually to be regarded as a new marriage) the ideal will yet come to pass, for then the woman shall compass the man, in the sense that the woman will serve the Man. Under the New Covenant Israel will serve the Lord. It will also be a fruitful marriage. Under the Old Covenant the woman was not willing to serve the Man. The woman wanted no fellowship with the Man. Hence: How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter?

Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, is even still named in Revelation. Jezebel = untouched. People regard that as complete, undamaged. A beautiful name therefore. She is considered to have been a beautiful woman. That will have been so too, for the king naturally had his pick.

The idea, however, is that Ahab and Jezebel were married, but that was about as far as it went. The woman did not compass the man. The name Jezebel is in the second place given to Old Testament Israel, which was not willing to have fellowship with her own Man. She was willing to have fellowship with other men, namely with the idols. That is why idolatry is also called fornication.

The principle is that the woman should compass the man in every respect. At any rate it means that she is for the help of the man and in the service of the man. In that sense she is also expected to be the glory of the man.

Glory = outward reflection. Just as Christ is the glory of God, or rather the reflection of God's glory, He is therefore the outward expression of the Godhead. Christ is the image of God, the outward form in which the Godhead reveals itself. That is necessary, because God Himself is invisible. Everything we see and know and can know of God relates to the Son: the image, the outward expression, the person.

In the same way the woman is expected to be the outward expression of the man and thus, as it were, to surround the man. She compasses him.

It is also not for nothing that the word for "house" can be translated as "woman."

Beth = house;

Bath = woman.

Completely the same word.

The woman is the house = a Jewish saying.

Housewife is then a pleonasm.

Hence also that the woman from of old manages the household, the course of affairs in a household, the outward aspect of the man.

Everything that is feminine is by definition outward, and everything that is masculine is by definition inward. Hence from of old nouns are divided into two categories, namely masculine and feminine words. That is because some things are essential, are content.

Then they are masculine. If they are open and encompassing, then they are feminine. Hence words in French that end openly, with a vowel, are generally feminine words. All things consist in principle of a core, the essence, and then the outward form. The core is the masculine and the outward form is the feminine. That expresses itself in man and woman too. The spiritual is masculine and the outward, the bodily, is feminine. Women generally also have more interest in outward things and men more in inward things. But it must then be said that there are very feminine men and also quite masculine women. That, however, detracts nothing from the principle.

Thus the church is expected to be the body of Christ. That means that Christ takes form in the church. In the same way Christ is expected to be the body of God. For He is the express image of God's person, and it is also said of Him that He is the brightness of God's glory.

Thus we come back to the principle of hierarchy. It begins with a core and expresses itself outward. If you start at the top, then the core expresses itself downward and you get the form of an inverted pyramid, which gets broader layers towards the bottom. The Principle is above, but expresses itself downward in breadth in this world.

This also means at the same time that all visible things in this creation are expressions of higher things. That also means that everything we see is by definition symbolism. The classical orthodox doctrine is that God reveals Himself in Scripture (in the Bible) and in the creature. That which of God cannot be known can yet be known, because God expresses Himself in creation (Romans 1:18–19). In other words, the whole world is full of symbolism.

Symbolism is always the impression of something higher. That is also what the word *typos* really means, for a *typos* is an impression. The whole world and the Bible too is an impression, a revelation, or better still, a self-revelation of the Godhead.

The believing man in the church is expected to be the expression of Christ, so that Christ takes form in his life. Thus the woman is expected to be the expression of her man, who is expected to be the expression of Christ.

Of us it is said that we should be conformed to the image of God's Son. As regards the married woman, that fundamentally goes through her husband. We men have the problem that we want to serve the Lord but do not know how; women have the problem that if they want to serve the Lord they must ask their husband. But what is wrong with that? Would it not be fine if you could recognise someone in the service of the Lord as your boss? That would make life a great deal easier, then you would not always have to choose. Then you could simply ask your boss.

For that purpose the clergy was invented in the church, the church hierarchy, with church princes and canon law. If the clergyman no longer knows, he goes to a higher rank and asks him. That is nice and easy, but that is not how it is arranged. That is not how it is set up. We all have our own responsibilities. We can protest against that, but that is how it is. We stand under the Lord and should serve Him. How exactly that should be done? Difficult to say, but as a woman it is already a great deal easier. She can serve her husband. That is where it begins. That is the normal course of things. Do not say: "I cannot do it," for whatever position you occupy, you can do it, for God says it is so. He says that we are not given anything to do beyond what we are able. He will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

As regards women, it may no longer fit in our society, but it is God's right to arrange things as He has done. Men actually find themselves in a much more difficult position, if only because they are indeed head of the household and that is no easy thing in practice. We should serve the Lord, but no one comes to tell us how we should do that, also because we have no church government.

This is the background of this Scripture passage. Our behaviour and outward forms are expected to be the expression of that. That is why these things are said here and we are confronted with this idea, that we cannot hide behind rules and laws. As regards the men, we stand in liberty and stand directly before the Lord, with whom we are expected to have a personal relationship and whom we are expected to serve directly. It is not desirable that a power should come between in the form of a head covering. The head covering comes off. You cannot hide behind that. The women then still have the advantage that they can hide behind their husband. They also have the advantage that in this present time and in our culture they can choose their own husband.

We should first acknowledge our position and then learn to live out of it. Under all circumstances it applies, in the power of God. You cannot go outside these principles that God arranged so from the beginning. That is why it says: for this is the will of God. We are assigned a place by God. That is our responsibility. In that we can under all circumstances trust in the Lord, who has placed us there and from whom we may also expect that He gives us the possibilities to walk in accordance with that and in this way and within this framework to serve Him.

For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

That the man is the image-bearer of God may perhaps be a bit far-fetched. Nevertheless that is the intention. As long as we are still in the flesh, probably not much will come of it, but that detracts nothing from the stated goal. We should be image-bearers of God and preferably already now. For it is the intention that God should be glorified in us. That will certainly happen in the future, but it is the intention that it should happen already now.

The man is the image and glory of God. Those are terms normally applied to Christ, for example in Hebrews 1:3. The same idea applies again one level lower in the hierarchy, for as God is the Head of Christ and Christ the Head of the man, so it is also the intention that the man should radiate the glory of Christ, just as Christ radiates the glory of God.

Again one level lower the woman should radiate or be the glory of the man. Thus it seems that the woman is primarily intended as a representation of the man. If you want to go through life as well as possible as a human being, then you had better keep as much as possible to what the Bible says about it, just as you should use certain objects in the way the designer or manufacturer intended. That is also how they hold up best and last longest. So it is with man and woman too. This is simply the position we should occupy. For us as believers it applies that we, precisely because we are believers and do not belong to this world, should keep as much as possible to the rules that from the beginning simply apply in the world. As children of God this also applies to our marriage relationship. We should strive as much as possible to correspond to what the Bible says about it. That is doable, for the Bible does not say much about it. It has to do with being subject and being subject to one another. That applies not only to the woman, but also

to the man. We have all been given our place. We should learn to accept that and live in it. Why not? Unbelievers too must learn to find their place in life.

The woman is therefore the glory of the man. The woman is the outward expression of the man. The woman represents her man outwardly. In principle man and woman are one. As said, we have unfortunately lost that in our culture. We are losing civilisation. All sacred cows, all taboos, all ordinances, everything had to be broken down. The establishment (that which already stood) had to be broken down. Thereby we no longer know where we are and who we are and thus also no longer where it should go. That is the background of this Scripture passage.

The woman is the glory of the man and she is placed under the man. The little hat is the figure of that. (That is why those who consider themselves church princes also wear such a bizarre head covering, a mitre. The two points of the mitre are the horns of Moses. The horns stand for the shining of Moses' face after he met the Lord. Hence in visual art Moses is recognisable by the two horns on his head. Qeren = horn. That stands for outgoing power, what one casts out from oneself. Reflection therefore. Hence the horn is also a figure of kingship.)

Nevertheless, the head covering is the power under which one stands. That is the law. But we, living under the New Covenant, have no head covering on—at least not in our relation to the Lord.

For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.⁹ Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

In Islam a woman without a head covering means she is available. As soon as she is married or given in marriage, she wears a head covering from that moment. She does not wear a ring, for a ring stands for authority. If in the Bible someone receives a ring, he receives authority.

Genesis 2:18

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

Who should complete him, fill him up. Opposite the one you have the other and together they form one whole. That is a general principle throughout nature, in which the masculine is completed by the feminine. In quite a lot of cultures, religions, and philosophies people have made quite a lot of that. Opposite yin stands yang. Opposite the one stands the other. You must then keep that in balance for a reasonably stable life. For the world that is certainly a nice thought. But in the Bible you find it just as well. That principle of course also comes from there, the masculine opposite the feminine. People have made a different philosophy of it: that we live in a dualistic world, but that is of course exactly the same. The one stands opposite the other and they keep each other in balance. You also find it in language. Everything regarded as a vessel, as an enclosure, and everything that is outward is by definition feminine. That which is essence, that which is content, is masculine.

The man, who stands higher than his wife, is of course masculine opposite his wife. The feminine is always subordinate to the masculine. The man, who stands under Christ, is feminine in relation to Christ. The church, which stands under Christ, is feminine in relation to Christ. In the Bible the church is also described as a woman. Everyone knows that. That is why it is also so difficult to explain that the church is nevertheless a man. Christ, who stands under God, because He is the outward expression of God's person, stands feminine opposite God. That of course does not mean He is a woman. It

concerns relationships, proportions. In them you have masculine and feminine. Even in Judaism people speak of Jehovah (whose Name one does not pronounce), who appears on earth, who visits Abraham in his tent, as the feminine of God. They know that Jehovah is the outward expression of the invisible and unknowable God. He is the appearance of the Godhead and thus the reflection of God's person

The highest is always masculine and what comes under it is always feminine in relation to the highest. Christ is masculine opposite everyone, except in relation to God, for Christ as Son is subordinate to the Father. The church is subordinate to Christ and the body is feminine in relation to the Head. But if you take the whole body, Head and body, then that stands in rank above Israel.

That means that the church is masculine in relation to Israel. So if you have found that Israel is announced as the coming bride, then it is now also clear who the Bridegroom is: namely Christ and the church. In that relationship the church is the body of the Bridegroom. Yet there is similarity in the relationship between the body and the Head and the bride in relation to the Bridegroom. Just as Israel stands feminine in relation to the Messiah and should serve Him, so the church also stands feminine in relation to the Messiah, because the church should serve the Messiah. That is why it is sometimes difficult to find the distinction between Israel and the church. There is a good reason for that, because often there is none. Nevertheless, it concerns those relationships that have to do with hierarchy. When Israel is described as a woman, it concerns Israel in relation to the Lord. Search it out. Israel will compass the Man and one day express the glory of Christ. That will be in a new marriage, not under the Old Covenant but under the New Covenant.

Genesis 2:18

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

Why so? The Lord could also have made her from a lump of clay. Obviously because of the symbolism.

22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

Rib = a side, a facet. If it is not literal, we call it an aspect. God took an aspect of Adam and built that out, from which it appears that men also have something feminine in them.

Adam was brought into a deep sleep and was no longer conscious of anything and was, so to speak, dead. In that time a woman was created from him. When he awoke, he was suddenly married.

23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

That was only with this woman. The other women had simply to be born afterwards. This first woman had a somewhat different origin.

Woman = ishshah.

These words are later quoted literally in Ephesians 5, where they are explained. From that it appears that Adam is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. While He has withdrawn (sleeps) in the hiddenness of heaven, yet the church, His wife, is being formed. Christ gave Himself for that church...

Ephesians 5:27

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

For they are one, for the woman is expected to have come from the body of the man.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

This sort of Scripture passages makes it completely impossible for the church to be the bride of Christ. That simply cannot be, for we are married. The church is the body of Christ and therefore feminine in relation to Christ and thus possibly the wife of Christ. Moreover, where the New Covenant is expected to be a marriage and we live under the New Covenant, there is therefore a marriage and thus fellowship. Before we began breaking down our culture, the bride was the bride as long as she had not yet had fellowship with the bridegroom. When that fellowship exists, it is no longer bride and bridegroom, but husband and wife. The discussion about whether the church is the bride or not would not matter so much, because few draw conclusions from it, were it not that with that claim the fellowship between the Lord and the church is in fact denied. Just watch: if one regards the church as the bride of Christ, then almost immediately it follows that, because we are the bride, we must wash and dress and perfume ourselves properly, for we must one day appear before the Lord and then we must look a bit neat on the wedding day. That is therefore a fatal misunderstanding, for in this passage the Bible clearly teaches that the Lord cares for His church. Not because He wants to come into that fellowship with the church one day, but because there has long been fellowship. The church is His wife, namely His body. We live in fellowship with the Lord and He would cleanse and sanctify us; He would present us to Himself without spot or wrinkle. We should not do that ourselves.

Ephesians 5:30

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Paul says this, but he quoted from Genesis 2 and therefore Genesis 2 speaks about Christ and the church. In other words, the creation of Eve from Adam is already in Genesis 2 a figure of the forming of the church from Christ. The church is therefore at the same time also in Christ, is in fellowship with Him, is flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones. Eve is the only woman who was married but was never a bride.

The relationship between the Lord and the church is set forth as an example for the fellowship of the believing man and woman in their marriage. That is a very high standard. It is therefore not the other way round, that the relationship between Christ and the church is compared with the relationship between man and woman. Then things would not be well with the relationship between Christ and the church. We tend to reason from ourselves, but that is not how it is. It is reasoned from God, because all things are after all created from God. He is the Norm.

If you want to know how it is between man and woman, then you have as a negative example the Lord and Israel. You should not follow that example, so that we do not fall

into the same example of unbelief. That marriage could not be maintained, partly because it was imposed from above.

The positive example is the relationship between the Lord and the church, because under the New Covenant the situation is different. We who belong to His wife, to the church, have received His life in us. We are of Him and therefore we are one. After all, we are family to one another, because we are all of Him. It should therefore not be so difficult to serve the Lord.

So it is also with man and woman. It may be more difficult to serve one another in marriage, but that high standard simply does not change.

1 Corinthians 11:9

Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

The woman was created for the sake of the man.

For = around.

The woman is the outward of the man, the external.

1 Corinthians 11:10 -12

For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.

11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

Referring back to verse 8 and Genesis 2.

So is the man also by the woman. It could have said “of,” only not referring back to Genesis 2, but obviously to what followed afterwards, for everyone knows that men are born of women.

Yet it does not say “of,” but “by.”

It would have been obvious, because it says “as... so,” that it should have said: as the woman was taken of the man, so is the man also of the woman. Now that it says “by,” it naturally receives some emphasis. For the origin of the man is also simply in the man, as the begetter. The man is conceived in the woman and comes through the woman into the world. That is at any rate the biblical thought.

For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.

The hat is therefore the symbolic expression of the power under which one stands.

Because of the angels. No idea what it means. A few views about it:

The thought is that it concerns heavenly beings, although the word without context simply means messenger. It could also still be a king, because a king is a messenger of God. Yet every human messenger is also called that.

If it concerns angels in the sense of heavenly beings, that must appear from the context. In this case it does not appear. That does not alter the fact that the Bible does teach that we are accompanied by angels. Angels are sent forth as ministering spirits for the sake of those who shall inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14). People have also deduced from that that every human being has his own angel. That is where the idea of the guardian angel comes from. With Roman Catholics he is always present; with Protestants only when needed. We know nothing more of it. At any rate they have to do with us. They guard us and watch over us; they come to help when they think it necessary, or when they are

told it is necessary. We are not the ones who say that. They do not stand in our service. They are ministering spirits, but they are sent by God Himself. Apparently they are in some way with us.

The idea is then, in connection with this verse, that when we as believers gather, the angels are with us and for the sake of the angels the women should then keep their heads covered. But why should that be for those angels? Angels are of the male kind and have sometimes let themselves be seduced by women (Genesis 6). The sons of God went in unto the daughters of men. Angels can appear on earth in human form. That is then a male form. They went after the women. That will happen again in the future, for then Satan and his personnel (angels) will be cast to earth. When an angel is cast to earth, he appears here in a male body. The chance that they will again go after the women is quite high, for Peter says that as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man. So it was in the days of Noah. In the future there will therefore be extraterrestrial humans who will do rather more than just go after the women.

If women should wear a hat for that reason, why must that then be only in the gatherings and not outside?

Why does the word angel not simply have the meaning of messenger here, as the meaning is in Greek? And why should the messenger not simply be the one who ministers the Word in the gatherings? Are those people then not to be trusted? Well, as a male speaker you can certainly be distracted by it. You see a lot in such a hall and some attract attention and sometimes deliberately. Great chance therefore that this verse concerns that. As a man you can therefore be quite distracted and that must not be. Where normally women go through life covered (indeed to the ankles) and in the gathering the covering is suddenly gone—not completely, but rather more than normally customary—that can distract. Other men are less distracted by it, because they are focused on the speaker (if all is well). The speaker himself is always focused on the people sitting before him.

At any rate, that is not where most weight is given in this verse. It concerns more the propriety of the woman. That propriety has to do with her knowing what her position is. The propriety of the man, who should also know what his position is, has to do with his approaching with unveiled face before the face of the Lord, with nothing in between. Nothing to hide behind.

1 Corinthians 11:13

Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? You know that the answer must be no, but everyone probably thinks it makes no difference to him.

1 Corinthians 11:14

Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?

We learn nothing more from nature. Then we have a discussion about how long is long and how short is short. The essence of the story is that the covering has been taken away. It is not about the woman having an uncovered head, but the men having an uncovered head. We have been brought into fellowship with the Lord and thus that covering is gone. The same thought is developed from verse 17 onwards, although it is

not specifically named there either. We know the Lord's Supper, but the essence is that the Passover lamb is no longer there. It is no longer a meal. What we have left is bread and wine from after the meal. In both cases it concerns what has been taken away. What has been taken away has to do with the Old Covenant. When that is gone, the New Covenant remains, out of which we live.

1 Corinthians 11:15

But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.

In practice all women like to wear long hair, but because it is far too much work to get it somewhat in order, they make it as short as possible. How is it that we consider it a glory for a woman to have long hair? Because we are more or less naturally expected to know that her hair is given her for a covering.

1 Corinthians 11:16

But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

Indication for the Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians 11:17

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

Believers gather together in order to become better from it. We come together to place ourselves under the Word, to continue steadfastly, as Acts 2 calls it, in the fellowship of the saints. There we should persevere, also in the doctrine of the apostles and in prayers.

Instead of the gatherings of believers in Corinth being profitable, for edification and building up, they worked exactly the opposite way. They were rather disorderly gatherings, and things went from bad to worse.

1 Corinthians 11:18

For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

There is evidently discord among the believers. Paul has already spoken earlier about those divisions in chapters 1 and 3. Among them there is envying and strife. One says he is of Paul, another of Apollos, and so on. Paul labels that as carnal.

Why does Paul partly believe that there are divisions among the Corinthians?

You might better translate it as trust. Every time you come across the word "believe" and you do not understand what it is about, replace that word with "trust," for in the original text it is the same word. The reverse naturally applies as well.

It seems he says that he does partly trust in those divisions. For he explains that.

1 Corinthians 11:19

For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

Heresies = false doctrines. It was written in the days of the Reformation; then you could hear that word everywhere. So it is not so bad, those heresies, for at least you know who is approved and who is not. In 1 John 2:19 it says that the unapproved are made manifest in this way. 1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Here the unapproved are therefore made manifest. Sometimes it is necessary that there should be a clearing out. That is never pleasant, but sometimes necessary.

The word heretic comes from Cathars. That is about the oldest grouping known in church history as people who did not submit to the authority of Rome. That is now a good thousand years ago.

It has always been so. The approved always came to light of their own accord, and then a new chapter in church history followed. Those were then church schisms. The mother church found that very bad, but then they should have been more faithful to the Lord.

The approved have always been made manifest. That is also the benefit of church schisms.

1 Corinthians 11:20

When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.

Note the connection with the previous verse. There were heresies and divisions. That is called division. Then there is talk of coming together, of assembling. We think that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is the expression of unity. Paul says that is indeed the intention. The Lord's Supper has often been used as an instrument to cause divisions, precisely because the celebration of the Lord's Supper is a figure of unity.

When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. In the first place it is not a supper, for in the following verse it says that every one takes before his own supper, where you should put the word "supper" in quotation marks, for the evening has nothing to do with it.

It is not a supper and it is not the Lord's supper. For it is not the Passover supper. That Passover supper is indeed the origin of what we still call the Lord's Supper today. The institution of bread and wine took place after the celebration of the Passover supper. That was not the eating of bread and wine, but the eating of the Passover lamb, as prescribed on the occasion of the exodus from Egypt, in Exodus 12. Let us therefore first look at what is said about it in the Bible. That is not much. The institution of the Lord's Supper we find in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. After that it only comes back in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 and along the way once more in Acts 2, but then only in the expression of breaking bread. That need not necessarily have anything to do with the Lord's Supper and can just as well mean an ordinary meal.

Matthew 26:17

Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?
18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

In other words, we are rightly here at the Passover. That is officially on the fourteenth of the first month (see Exodus 12 and Leviticus 23). That is during the unleavened bread. On the fourteenth of the first month the leaven had to be put out of the houses. In practice people still do that today on the evening of the thirteenth. We still owe the great spring cleaning to that, the idea that you must clean the whole house in spring. On the fourteenth the Passover lamb is slain and eaten. There is then no more leaven in the house. The next day, that is the fifteenth, is the first day of the seven-day feast of unleavened bread. The fourteenth is no feast, but it is the slaying and eating of the Passover lamb. The next day is the feast of unleavened bread, also called the feast of Passover. All those days there is no leaven present, from which it follows that the bread the Lord broke and handed to His disciples was at any rate unleavened bread. It is now the fourteenth of the first month...

Matthew 26:26

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

That last is of course a metaphor. It is of course not His body, but bread. It represents His body. The idea that it is a metaphor people still have great difficulty with in various circles. It also does not say afterwards: which is broken for you. It was broken, for normal people, English excepted, break bread.

27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Blood = life. If you lose blood, you do not lose your death but your life. Hence blood is also synonymous with spirit, for spirit is also life. Spirit and life is therefore one expression for exactly the same thing.

It is the blood of the new testament. Death of the new testament is quite impossible, for the New Covenant is only made with those who have received eternal life. That eternal life is the life of the New Covenant. That is why it is also called blood of the new testament.

Which is shed for many = we are expected to be sprinkled with this blood, with this life of Christ. This too is of course figurative speech. We have part in the blood, in the life of Christ. Moreover we are cleansed by His blood. That does not concern unbelievers but believers, who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ that they have and that is in them.

Blood provides in the body for the transport of food and carries away waste. We are therefore nourished and cleansed by the blood. That is not death but life. The cup with wine is therefore a figure of the life of the New Covenant. Unfortunately people have made something else of it in church tradition, for completely unclear reasons.

We receive part in the blood of Christ, just as one receives part in the wine one drinks. It is handed to us and we take it to ourselves. Quite apart from the fact that every meal is a figure of life and fellowship.

This happened on the night in which He was betrayed, from which it follows that He was crucified on the fifteenth of the first month. That was therefore on the first day of the feast of Passover, also called the first day of the feast of unleavened bread.

• Mark 14:12

And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?

13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him:

14 And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

15 And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.

16 And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

• Mark 14:22

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.

23 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.

•24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

26 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. This is all to a high degree the same as in Matthew 26.

• Luke 22:7

Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.

8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.

9 And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare?

10 And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.

11 And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

12 And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

13 And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

The body = the church.

In remembrance of me = one should think of the Lord who lives.

We do not think of the One who died, but of the One who lives, who produces bread and wine, just like Melchizedek, after the slaughter of the kings.

Since His resurrection He gives us life by connecting us with His body. In John 13 there is admittedly no mention of the institution of the Lord's Supper, but it is the longest exposition of that evening. Four chapters long, namely.

John 13:1

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

That was therefore the fourteenth of the first month. Note well, this is the proverbial difference between John and the other Evangelists. In the other Gospels it says that it was on the first day of unleavened bread, and here that it was before the feast of Passover = the feast of unleavened bread. That feast only begins on the fifteenth. Instead of the institution of the Lord's Supper we find here the parable of the vine (chapter 15).

Furthermore the Lord's Supper is not spoken of any more here. We find that only in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 and along the way once more in Acts 2, but then only in the expression of breaking bread. That need not necessarily have anything to do with the Lord's Supper and can just as well mean an ordinary meal.

1 Corinthians 10:16

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

The blood is expected to be in the body, to hold the body together. The body is not the body of the Lord Jesus on the cross, but the church. We are that body, under the New Covenant. The blood is therefore the life of the New Covenant. In 1 Corinthians 12 the concept of blood is replaced by Spirit, which is fundamentally the same. With blood one thinks more of nourishment and cleansing.

The Corinthians did indeed celebrate the so-called Lord's Supper, but in reality they celebrated whole meals, in which they behaved disorderly, gorged themselves gluttonously, and even got drunk. Paul says that the Lord's Supper is not intended for that. That is eating and drinking unworthily. Then you abuse it for the old man, while in reality it is about a symbolic meal that should fix us on our real position, namely our fellowship with Christ, as members of that one body. That is expressed in that we are all partakers of that one bread.

The Corinthians celebrated the Lord's Supper. They could certainly do that, but they should also have drawn the consequences from it. Otherwise one eats and drinks unworthily. That is much the same as a traitor singing the Wilhelmus. It is unworthy to sing the Wilhelmus. If you do it, then behave accordingly. That is not only the thrust of the epistles to the Corinthians, but of all New Testament epistles, in which it is not said that we must become citizens of heaven, but that we are citizens of heaven and are called to draw the consequences from that—walking worthy of the Lord, worthy of God, worthy of the gospel.

The church is not an organised unity but an organic unity, pictured in bread and wine.

The Last Supper, the famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci, is a beautiful representation

of it: gathered at one table, of which the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the host. He hands out the food.

Certainly in the New Testament we repeatedly come across a feast, sometimes literally, sometimes in parables, all of which express precisely the same thing. "O come into the King's hall, come weak and weary; there is room at the wedding feast." That is what the singing sisters sang.

The meal throughout the Bible is the figure of the situation under the New Covenant, the festive meal, fellowship with one another. The gospel is the invitation to come to that table.

The meal was prepared and the servants went out to call the invited guests to the table. Then it appeared that the invited guests did not want to come. They all had some excuse. Then came the weak, the lame, the blind, and the weary, and so the church came into being. The invited guests are in the first place the Jewish people. They did not want to come, and so salvation was sent to the Gentiles, and they would hear.

The Lord has prepared a table and we should sit down at the Lord's table. Do we still celebrate the Lord's Supper then? Preferably yes, but it has little to do with it. The Lord's Supper is only the figure of it and is therefore in itself of subordinate importance. More important is that in daily life we truly live out of what the Lord hands us. He gives us this bread that has come down from heaven; He gives us this blood, this life, of the New Testament, of the New Covenant. Eternal life, namely. He is the One who feeds us and gives us everything we need. In short, our whole life should be sitting down at His table, a life in fellowship with Him and preferably also in the upper room, as a figure of the heavenly position of the believer.

The Lord's Supper is mentioned here not because it is such an important institution for us, to which we must hold, but because it is such an important and all-embracing example of the real position in which we as believers stand. That example matters as an example, so that we should actually live out of it in practice, our whole life.

Mephibosheth sat at David's table the rest of his life. He was maintained by David from the royal house. Did they also literally sit together at one table? Perhaps, but it is not necessary when speaking in these terms. It is about knowing what it means and also knowing what it means for us to sit down at the Lord's table. Then the image of the Lord's Supper celebration suddenly gains great significance.

In Matthew 26 from verse 26 they are gathered at the Passover meal, Seder evening. What precedes the Lord's Supper, namely the slaying and eating of the Passover lamb, is the figure of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. That had to happen so that one could be delivered on that basis.

See Exodus 12, where the very first institution of the Passover meal is described. Israel was then still in Egypt, in that world in which one was still in slavery. On the tenth of the first month they were to take the Passover lamb into the house (later they crossed the Jordan on the tenth of the first month) and keep it with them in the house for four days. On the evening of the fourth day the Passover lamb was to be slain and eaten. The blood of the Passover lamb (the life) was to be struck on the door, so that the blood of the Passover lamb became the life of the door, whereby you have a living door. Through that door one would then go out once and for all from Egypt, on the way to the promised land.

That has happened in the past, for it speaks of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7), therefore let

us keep the feast. That has been and therefore speaks of the past. The point is that the Lord Jesus, after eating the Passover lamb, took the bread, broke it, and distributed it. He did the same with the wine. He poured it out and distributed it. That is a further stage and officially after the meal. It is occasionally stated as well. And He took the cup and said: This is the blood of the New Testament. That is therefore the life of the New Covenant. One receives the life of the New Covenant on the ground of faith, through new birth. After that one has that new life and it is the intention that that life should also actually be lived. That follows on the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Once again for emphasis, bread and wine are not the figure of His death and possibly even His resurrection, but they are the figure of the risen Christ and His work. It therefore begins with:

Romans 8:34

“Yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us”.

We are speaking of the High Priest of the New Covenant after the order of Melchizedek, who became that after His resurrection.

What does such a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek do? He offers Himself, His body. That is us. He brings forth bread and wine. That He did after the slaughter of the kings (Genesis 14; Hebrews 7). In Genesis 14 there was war, with Abraham's campaign to rescue Lot and the inhabitants of Sodom. With those inhabitants it later went badly anyway. In that battle Abraham was alone with the army he apparently still managed to raise. When everything was settled, there appeared that king of righteousness, the king of Salem and priest of the most high God. And He brought forth bread and wine. Did He then have no part in that battle? The Lord perhaps did, but not in the capacity of High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. He only comes after that battle.

In short, the work of Christ as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek was not His work in the past, which culminated in His suffering and death on the cross, for His priesthood after the order of Melchizedek only begins in His resurrection, when He said: “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.”

His work as High Priest began only when God said to Him: “Sit thou at my right hand; Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” So it stands several times in the epistle to the Hebrews. Each time you should ask what He has done since then. Because you have read Genesis 14, you say: “He brings forth bread and wine.” That is not stated in Hebrews, but that epistle does explain what it means. He gives us life; He strengthens us; He sees to it that we stay healthy; He sees to it that everything that does not belong in us is also sufficiently suppressed. In other words, He cleanses our hearts from an evil conscience to serve the living God.

If you know those truths, then you recognise them in this image, in the ceremony of bread and wine. That the disciples themselves did not recognise that here is undoubtedly true, but even the Roman Catholic Church says to this day that it is a figure of the unity of the church. That is also so. Apparently something of it has remained, although they too connect what we call the Lord's Supper with the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus.

In John 13, where the Lord Jesus is also together with the disciples in the upper room on Seder evening, you find nothing further about the institution of the Lord's Supper, but you do find the announcement of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who would educate and lead the believer into all truth. In chapter 15, still on the same evening, you find the

parable of the vine. John devotes five chapters to what the Lord Jesus said that evening. Nothing at all is said about the meal itself and nothing about the institution of the Lord's Supper. Those five chapters speak about the present work of Christ as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, or otherwise as Head of the church, which in practice is exactly the same.

1 Corinthians 11:21 - 24

For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

It is a figure of the body of Christ, which is the church, about which chapters 12–14 speak anyway. The church as one body, formed out of different organs, all of which stand in the service of one another.

When the Lord Jesus offered His body, He offered the church.

To offer = to present to someone higher than ourselves; to the king or to God.

To offer does not mean to die, although that sometimes plays a role in it.

Christ offered His body when He said:

Hebrews 10:9–10

“Lo, I come to do thy will, O God,” in which will we are sanctified. We are His body.

2 Corinthians 3:5–6

Just as the Lord Jesus Christ is set in the service of God, so we as His body are also set in the service of God. Our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able ministers of the new testament

It is one great coherent New Testament truth. It is mentioned everywhere, but unfortunately mostly reasoned away.

The Lord Himself makes us partakers of Himself. He Himself gives us His life. In John 17 it is said that God has given us to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the last of the five chapters about the night in which He was betrayed. The Lord prays there for those whom God has given Him and of whom He also said that same evening: “No man can pluck them out of my hand.” If you want comment on the meaning of the Lord's Supper, then especially read those five chapters. There you find the application. The unity of the church as joined to and thus as one with Christ, who is the Head of the church, or the Shepherd of His flock, or the High Priest of His people. That is three times the same. Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. If you make use of that ceremonial meal and take of that bread, then you should do so in remembrance of the Lord, of Christ, our Head.

If that one bread is the figure of that one body, then you realise that you form part of the fellowship of believers and thereby of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. That is also what it is for, that it should fix our thoughts.

That is symbolism. You can object to that, but there are probably many people who are precisely taught by symbolism, because they remember much more easily what it is about. Such an image makes the meaning of the fellowship we have with the Lord easier to understand.

1 Corinthians 11:25

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

It is after the supper, after the eating of the Passover lamb.

The table of the Lord is the figure of our culture, our way of life as Christians, of the principles that prevail in our Christian lives, which proceed from grace, which after all should reign over us from the throne of grace.

This cup is the new testament in my blood. It of course does not concern the cup, but what is in it. There was wine in that cup, the fruit of the vine. Wine contains alcohol = spirit. That is precisely what it is about, that Spirit = life. The wine is a figure of the New Covenant, the blood of the New Covenant, the life of the New Covenant. This is the blood of the New Testament. The expression is here slightly changed to emphasise "my blood." It is the life of the Lord that is in us.

We should do this repeatedly, in contrast to baptism. We do that once. Baptism therefore has more to do with death and resurrection with Christ, whereby one is indeed cleansed, once and completely. That is why baptism is also seen as the washing away of sins. We have done that once, in the past. The celebration of the Lord's Supper, however, is repeated, because it is the figure of the continued work of Christ in our present time.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper together you find beautifully expressed in the footwashing in John 13, where the Lord Jesus, without anyone asking Him, began to wash His disciples' feet. Peter made a point of discussion about it and thought that footwashing by the Lord was not necessary. The Lord then said: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Then it had to be done completely, but that was not necessary, because that had already happened once. If someone has once been completely cleansed, then he only needs his feet washed. In other words, before you go to the meal, you are already completely cleansed. You pick up some dirt along the way, but on entering your feet are cleansed. That is the whole story.

The complete washing has to do with the death and resurrection of the Lord. After that He cleanses our feet, that which still connects us with the earth and defiles us. He sees to it that we remain clean. The expression "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin" does not concern that one-time cleansing, but the footwashing. That is our daily sins. He cleanses us from them. We therefore need not ask Him for it, although that is not forbidden. Even if we do not ask for it, He does it. For the High Priest makes reconciliation for the sins of His people. Not for the sins of those who are not His people, for that He has done once. Now He does only a work for His people. He cleanses us by the washing of water, namely by the word. If we therefore withdraw from that word, we withdraw from His life, from His work, and thus also from that cleansing. If we therefore withdraw from that word, then He does not cleanse us either.

Some say that this may well stand in the Bible, but that it is not in the interest of our salvation. That is a rather fatal misunderstanding, for however it may be, if it is the word

of God, then it should do something to, in, and through us. We do not decide what it will do. We have no say in it and no influence on it. The Lord gives us that word and speaks to us through that word. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh (Hebrews 12:25). His word serves for our building up, for our nourishment, and thereby also for our cleansing.

2 Timothy 3:16–17

All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works

All Scripture. God does His work precisely through His word. If one must explain how the Lord cleanses our consciences from dead works, one could probably write a doctoral thesis on it, but would that be of any use? Fortunately we have these images, this symbolism, which explain to us how it works. He does a work upon us. We sit at His table and He gives us bread and wine and He washes our feet. The disciples did not ask for the bread, they did not ask for the wine, they did not ask for that footwashing, but the Lord did it and they were guests with Him.

1 Corinthians 11:26

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

It is especially to this expression that we owe the fact that in the Lord's Supper people often think of the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus. But that is not what it says. It says: As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death. This means that thereby it is proclaimed that the Lord is dead. When you announce someone's death, you do not announce how he died, but that he has died. That is what it means here too. It is not about His suffering, but about His death.

But the Lord lives, does He not? That is also true, but notice what is not said. It does not say that you proclaim the death of Jesus or the death of Christ, but the Lord's death.

That is a biblical theme with far-reaching consequences.

The Lord's death actually means that thereby an end has come to the dominion of the law, namely to the Old Covenant.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:2:

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Notice that here too it does not say: and His crucifixion. Did Paul then not preach the resurrection of the Lord Jesus? Certainly he did, for that is precisely the content of the gospel. Why then is this written? Well, very simply, because you gain little in your practical life when the Lord Jesus Christ lives and you do not first accept that He has died.

Galatians 6:14

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

If the Lord Jesus died for us and we have died with Him, then we are dead to the world. We are then also dead to the law, for the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. If we have died, then we are freed from the dominion of the law.

We are then also dead to sin, in the sense that sin no longer has dominion over us, for we are simply not under the law. If you believe that the Lord Jesus died for you, then you

also believe that you no longer have any right in the world and that you no longer live under the dominion of the elementary principles of the world, of the law, and of sin. If you find that difficult to accept, then little remains except the preaching of this Jesus and Him crucified.

The problem of the Corinthians was that they thought they had to establish something or other in the world. They were carnal believers, oriented towards the old man, oriented towards the here and now. That is not Christian, for Christianity begins beyond the cross. It begins with accepting that we have died to sin, to the law, and to the world. Only then can you understand what it means that we have a living Christ. He cares for us and we live under the dominion of grace. The concepts of law and grace simply cannot be mixed. They do not tolerate each other. That falls under the category: no man can serve two masters.

In short, the Lord's death means that we do not live under the Old Covenant but under the New Covenant.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death.

Proclaim that you do not live under the principles of the Old Covenant.

A detailed doctrinal exposition of this we find in Romans 7.

Romans 7:1

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

If you then insist on holding to the law, you are also expected to know the law. You then also know that the law has dominion over a man only as long as he lives. If the man has died, then he is thereafter free from the law. The law has dominion over the living and not over the dead.

Romans 7:2

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

We have died and been freed from the dominion of the law, that we should now belong to and live under the dominion of another. No longer under Jehovah, but under the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 7:5

For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

2 Corinthians 3:6

God has made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life

Here in Romans 7 the situation under the oldness of the letter (law) is compared with a marriage in which the husband has died. Therefore the wife (we) is now free to unite with another, and preferably with Him who is risen from the dead. That is imagery taken from the Old Testament. There the relationship between Israel and the Lord is described as a marriage; a marriage that brought forth no fruit. That marriage came to nothing.

Ultimately the Husband died, whereby Israel is free from the law of the Husband. Israel is therefore no longer under the law. The intention is that it now let itself be united with another Husband, whom it should serve, namely Him who is risen from the dead. It is said in the law that if a marriage is dissolved, the woman may not return to the husband. That marriage may then not be restored. The Lord nevertheless says about it: "Yet return again to me." But is that not contrary to the law? That "me" is the Lord, but not in His capacity as Lord of the law, but in His capacity as Christ, as the one risen from the dead. It is then not a restoration of the Old Covenant, but a beginning of a New Covenant.

For us it is exactly the same. When we come to the Lord, we are not placed under the Old Covenant. For death has put an end to that. When we come to the Lord, we come to Him who is risen from the dead, to the High Priest of the new covenant. We serve Him then not under the law, but under grace. This is the idea.

The same idea is also described by means of the symbolism of the High Priest.

Hebrews 9:16

For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

Hebrews 9:15

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament, that those who are called might receive the promised eternal inheritance. That is the main clause. He is mediator of the New Covenant, that the called (the believers) might receive the promised eternal inheritance. That eternal inheritance was already promised in the Old Testament in Genesis. At any rate already to Abraham, for it concerns the fulfilment of promises made to Abraham. Galatians 3 explains that as long as the law reigned those promises could not even be fulfilled. Moreover the law, which was given 430 years after the promise to Abraham, adds nothing to or takes nothing from the promises to Abraham. That the law stood in the way of the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham is because the law is based on the idea of works and earning, while the promises to Abraham were on the ground of grace. Those two do not tolerate each other and so it was a matter of waiting for the end of the old covenant.

Hebrews 7:18

It was waiting for the destruction of the foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness .

Christ is therefore mediator of the New Covenant, that the believers might receive that eternal inheritance. For that there first had to be an end to the old covenant. That is stated in the subordinate clause: by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament. That death puts an end to the dominion of the old covenant, but at the same time it also brought redemption for the sins committed under the Old Testament. That has to do with the fact that this Testator who dies here is also the Son of man, who represented the whole human family as Redeemer before God, so that He as the only one could die for all. Thereby the sins were redeemed. For what was impossible for the law, in that it was weak through the flesh, God has accomplished, sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3).The

Lord's death, as said, put an end to the Old Covenant and cleared the way for the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham and thus cleared the way for the execution of the New Testament. The New Testament is in practice nothing other than the execution of the promises made to Abraham.

The short route is that of Acts 2 and Acts 13. Both Peter and Paul say that God has fulfilled and fulfils the promises He made in the past in and through the resurrection of Christ from the dead and thus after death. The execution of the Testament consisted in the first place in the resurrection of Christ Himself. Then the resurrection and new birth of all who believe. But first Christ, as the firstborn of every creature. That fulfilment continues to this day in the forming of the church and continues to the last day.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

Thus one proclaims the Lord's death. That is not given as a command, but by eating the bread and drinking the cup one thereby proclaims the Lord's death.

- English Revised Version
For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.
- New International Version
For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
- International Standard Version
For as often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes Lord's death till he come.

By eating and drinking one proclaims the Lord's death till he come. What implies that the Lord is not dead, for otherwise He cannot come in the future. One thinks of the Lord who has died to sin, to the world, and to the law and in the future will yet establish His glory and His kingdom on earth. In the meantime we live. The old has passed away and the new has already begun and will be revealed in the future.

One can also remember these things with a view to the future. That would not be linguistically incorrect and it corresponds exactly to what the Bible teaches in general about us as believers. We live out of that blessed hope of the appearing in glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The intention is that we should be taught by these images, that we should learn our lessons from them and understand that we sit at His table. We are subject to Him and live out of what God gives us. We serve Him and should He find anything lacking in us, well, if the Lord thinks something is not right, then He does something about it. That is not our concern. Our concern is that we give Him the opportunity to do so. He gives us everything we need. He hands us food so that we should grow in knowledge, grace, and faith. Moreover He occasionally also washes our feet. Reason enough therefore to think of Him.

1 Corinthians 11:27

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

Wherefore = on the ground of these things, on the ground of the foregoing. Conclusions are drawn from the foregoing.

Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily. What can that be, that one eats and drinks unworthily?

- It will be clear that someone who for his practical life does not want to draw the consequence that he forms part of the body of Christ and lives in fellowship with Christ under the New Covenant, under the dominion of the throne of grace, may indeed eat and drink of the so-called Lord's Supper, but he does so completely unworthily, because the image in which he participates does not correspond to his practical life. Paul does not say that he may no longer participate in the Lord's Supper (the Lord's Supper is of course for all believers), but that he should then change his practical life.
- It is unworthily if one does not do it in remembrance of Him, at whose table we sit and who is expected to hand out the bread.
- Unworthily also means that one does not proclaim the Lord's death, or does not acknowledge the Lord's death. Indeed eating and drinking at the Lord's Supper, but not acknowledging that one has died to the world, to sin, and to the law. Placing oneself on the one hand under the Old Covenant, under the law and possibly serving sin and living in the midst of the world and on the other hand participating in the Lord's Supper, that is eating and drinking unworthily.
- Claiming one's right as a human being in the world and living under the elementary principles of this world and participating in the Lord's Supper, that is eating and drinking unworthily. One does have the image in one's midst, but does not acknowledge it. That will undoubtedly be the psychological background of the phenomenon that people have lost the real meaning of bread and wine, simply because one does not want to acknowledge that one has died to the world, to sin, and to the law. Then one makes of the proclamation of the Lord's death the proclamation of the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus. That is done in wide circles. Thereby one has lost the point of this whole image.
- Whoever does not acknowledge that and yet uses these signs does so unworthily.

Are there sanctions for that? Yes, it is just not the right word. Whoever eats and drinks unworthily makes himself guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Whoever eats and drinks unworthily in practice pays no heed to the church (he withdraws from it), thereby has guilt towards that body, for we all as children of God have the moral obligation to take our place in that whole. We are children of God and invited guests and should sit down at His table, in the figurative sense of the word. We should walk worthily within the church the vocation wherewith we are called. That is the guilt we have. For ye are bought with a price and therefore we should serve Him. We are His property and therefore servants of Him, although He has redeemed us. The question is what we do with our free life. The first option is that we serve Him who bought and paid for us. If you have any sense of norms and values, you know that is the consequence. He cleanses our hearts from an evil conscience not for nothing. He does that so that we should serve the living God.

Whoever therefore eats and drinks unworthily stands guilty towards the body and the life of Christ. One does take the signs to oneself, but does not want to acknowledge the meaning of the signs.

But well, then we stand guilty, what consequences does that have? Those are named from verse 32 onwards. That is coming then.

1 Corinthians 11:28

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

We should first examine ourselves and ask where we stand in life. Do we live in the world? It is not about the extremes in the world, but about the world with all those fine things: art, philosophy, science. All those things one would heartily recommend to a man, were it not that it is not our world. It is not only about that list of fornication, drunkenness, and so on, which we as Christians then may not do. Those things are indeed worldly too, but there are other things in the world that have far more far-reaching consequences. Those lie precisely in areas we humans highly value, because they have to do with human achievements. That is what is warned against in the first place, for that is characteristic of the world in which we live.

The most important thing in it is that people in general in the world are inclined to hold down the truth in unrighteousness. That is precisely what you find in those higher things. They serve to hold down the truth. We should ask whether that is our world. Do those things determine our life? How do we live actually; according to precepts, according to the law? Or are we free and bear our own responsibility? It may be noble to acknowledge laws and rules, but that does not alter that we should learn to bear our own responsibility and make our own decisions in relation to the Lord. That also means that you indeed out of free will, because you yourself bear the responsibility, possibly choose certain rules. You do not have to ask every time what you should do now. It is about the responsibility not lying with some legislator or other, but with yourself. That is the liberty we have. Do we stand in it, before we go to the Lord's Supper?

It can of course also be the other way round. If you have participated in the Lord's Supper, in the symbol and the sign, then you can draw the consequences from it, by also living out of it in the practice of your life.

We sit at His table = He cares for us. He hands us bread = He hands us His word. That is the bread of life. Through Moses there also came bread from heaven, but the people still died. Then the Lord Jesus said about that: "I am the true bread that came down from heaven." We know Him as the personification of the word of God. If you therefore reject the word of God, then you reject the bread. Then you can indeed sit at the Lord's Supper and eat a piece of that bread, but it is rather unworthy if you further pay no heed to that word.

He hands bread and you say: "No, thank you," or: "It does not taste good to me." The Israelites said that too. They even loathed it. They wanted something else than the word of God, for that is what is pictured in it.

1 Corinthians 11:29

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Strictly speaking "unworthily" is not here. In most manuscripts it is not there, but it makes little difference, because it is derived from the expression in verse 27.

For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself. He thereby calls down judgment upon himself. This is a remarkable connection between typology and what we call reality. One does participate in bread and wine, but does not want to accept the truth pictured in it. Not the truth that is preached, but the truth pictured in it.

Then one calls down judgment upon oneself. One is expected to know it, but at the same time does not want to know it.

Not discerning the Lord's body. He does not want to discern the Lord's body, not see it, not acknowledge it. He does not want to acknowledge that in his ordinary life as a child of God he is expected to sit down at the Lord's table. He does want to sit down literally at a table and does want to take the bread and wine to himself literally, but he does not want to have part in the spiritual things pictured in it.

Whoever does discern the Lord's body does not take it into his head to exclude others from the Lord's table, let alone to set up a screening committee that determines whether one may or may not participate in the Lord's Supper. Thereby one makes it one's own table and thereby makes the so-called church one's own church and sets oneself at its head. That one cannot do. That table is the Lord's and it is His church. He is the Head, we are not. It is His table; we have nothing to say about it. We are all guests there and we respond to the invitation. We commend everyone to respond especially to that invitation, both in the literal sense and in the figurative sense. We commend everyone to indeed acknowledge that body of Christ and acknowledge Him as Head and to live out of what He hands us, also in daily life, perhaps in material blessings, although it is in the first place about the spiritual blessings that come to us in His word and thereby in His life, in His bread and in His wine.

If all is well we live like that, but whoever does not want that does not discern the Lord's body. In the Roman Catholic Church Christ is not at the head, but the pope. He is the vicar of Christ. He has dethroned Christ and sat on it himself. There is therefore no longer any question of the body of Christ, but of a human organisation. That has nothing more to do with the body of Christ. Not that a Roman Catholic cannot have part in the body of Christ, but those two are not the same. They are two completely different things. People do say that Roman Catholics are still well off, because they have only one pope. We are guests at the Lord's table and not we call the tune, He calls the tune. Our responsibility is to accept and take what He gives = believe. As many as received Him, namely as many as believe in Him.

1 Corinthians 11:30

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

These are about the most serious words that can be addressed to believers, at least with regard to our ordinary daily life. There are even more serious words, but those concern losing the inheritance at the revelation before the judgment seat of Christ in the future.

Wherefore... Why? Because one eats and drinks unworthily, because one does not discern the Lord's body. That is not because one celebrates the Lord's Supper wrongly, but because one does not discern the body, not even by means of the type, which one apparently knows.

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

Here it says that many can be weak and sick because of not eating and drinking worthily and not discerning the body of Christ.

Sickly is even stronger than weak, and many who sleep is even stronger than sickly, for that means that many have died.

All this can therefore have consequences on the earthly level. The church is the body of Christ and He would regulate the affairs in the church. What do you think He does when

we obstruct the course of affairs? Withdrawing from it is one thing; another thing is when we oppose it. The Lord is Head of the church and now we think we should become the head of the church. Then you can imagine that He ensures you become weak, sick, or nauseous. Then at least you do not stand so much in His way and disappear from the scene.

Of course one must bear in mind that many things that happen, also among believers, are not at all the work of the Lord. If someone opposes His work and becomes sick, weak, or nauseous, why should the Lord do anything about it? We never know exactly what the work of the Lord is and how far it extends and where it moves. We can only say some principled things about what that work of the Lord consists in, but in what way He executes it and whom He uses for it is never entirely clear to us. A little perhaps, but not completely.

Furthermore it is so that if that work encounters some hindrance, the Bible says that this is good for the work itself. Then everyone knows again what they are about and what it is about. That the Lord quickly intervenes seems unlikely, but that He does so on occasion seems very probable.

Because so many children of God in practice stand in the way of the Lord's work, there are so many weak and sick. That makes it difficult for them to occupy themselves with anything any more. Some the Lord simply takes away. Are those people then lost? In a certain sense yes. They are at any rate deprived of quite a lot of reward. Do they still come to heaven? Yes, for they were already there. They were already seated with Christ in the heavenlies, but precisely for that reason. If you oppose Him, that is life-threatening. These are therefore very serious words of Paul. He goes further into that afterwards. If in your own body a body part spoils the whole, then you go to a doctor and, if possible, have that body part removed. Why should the Lord not do something like that?

The parable that the Lord spoke on the same evening as the institution of the Lord's Supper, that of the vine, has many aspects and is therefore in short somewhat difficult to explain, but the idea in it is clear enough. Whoever abides in that vine but does not want to bear fruit stands in the way of the others and therefore the Lord cuts them away, so that the others may bear more fruit. Whether He always does that and where His limit is and how He judges it? We can only guess.

If you withdraw, you will probably be little trouble to others, but if you still participate in all activities but in practice oppose the work of the Lord, then you run a great risk. It could well be that the Lord then takes you away. Now do not turn it round and say that if someone is weak, sick, or nauseous, or dies, that is a punishment from the Lord, for that is not so. One can be born that way through predisposition, or contract a disease for whatever reason, but that is not what it is about now. The Lord can also use this sort of thing for His own purpose. He can set someone aside temporarily, provisionally, or definitively, because he hinders others.

1 Corinthians 11:31

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

These are rather heavy terms, but not unjustly.

To judge = another way is taken.

How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

Judgments and ways are exactly the same. A turn is taken, a certain route chosen. We should choose ourselves and that is not so difficult. We choose for the Lord and we choose for life. We choose today whom we will serve. If you do not do that, then go away and do not meddle with others who do choose. If you do that anyway, then you are involved in that struggle and it can well be that the Lord removes you from it. We should make a choice, for otherwise the Lord does it. That is the risk we run in any case. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

1 Corinthians 11:32

But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

Where we are judged, there we are chastened of the Lord. They are educational measures.

The world lives, exists, finds itself under the judgment of God.

Romans 1:18

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

What does that wrath or judgment consist in?

Romans 1:24

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

That is of course not all that is said, but it means at any rate that God has let mankind go.

John 3:19

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

The Lord has withdrawn from the world, and now there is darkness in the world. The world finds itself today in darkness, under the power of the prince of darkness. The main rule is that God has let the world go and does not concern Himself with it. If we are condemned with the world, that means that God lets us go and leaves us to our fate. We must then see, although in that darkness there is not much to see.

If this sort of judgment comes upon us, then we should regard it as chastening, as education. We should learn what position we occupy and therefore should occupy in the practice of our life. If we endure that chastening, God regards us as sons (Hebrews 12). It is therefore not merely condemnation in the sense of rejection, but in the sense of chastening. At least, that is how we should interpret it. The responsibility lies with ourselves. If we do not know how to behave in the church, then that can have consequences. We should know how to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). That is what this is about. You cannot just tamper with it and think you have everything to say about it. You cannot just arrange it as you wish; we stand under the authority of that Head.

The risk is that we withdraw from that Head and the risk of that is that the Lord then pushes us aside. Sometimes even in the way mentioned here: weak, sick, and sometimes even fallen asleep.

We should therefore judge ourselves, so that we are not judged of God.

1 Corinthians 11:32

But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

A large part of what calls itself Christian lives in the midst of the world and has nothing to do with Christianity. They live under the same judgment as that under which the world lives. Whether they use a Bible or not has nothing to do with it. They simply live in darkness, in ignorance. They must grope through life, in all uncertainty. Some even boast of that, that they more or less manage to find their way by groping. Do not ask them where that way goes, or where they actually want to go, for they have no idea. Just like the world. They live under the judgment of a world in darkness. We know that we are children of God and that we should walk in the light and have fellowship with one another, with God and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:7). Fellowship. With that we are back at this table.

1 Corinthians 11:33

Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

That is precisely what it is: a coming together. The meal is a figure of fellowship. Tarry one for another. Welcome one another. Do that especially. Celebrate the Lord's Supper too. Do it, but let yourself also be taught by it and draw consequences from it for your daily life.

Verse 33 begins with the same words as verse 27. That very often means that you can place those verses side by side, in the sense that after verse 26 you can continue in verse 27, but also in verse 33 and possibly skip the intervening part.

1 Corinthians 11:26

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

You can therefore also read it that way and that is undoubtedly the intention.

One should welcome one another.

1 Corinthians 11:34

And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

The intention is not that bread and wine provide for bodily needs. The Lord's Supper is not there to feed our bodies. It has only a spiritual meaning. You must keep those two things apart above all.

Bread and wine have nothing to do with the nourishment of the body. You also eat and drink unworthily with that, for thereby you lose the whole application to the body of Christ and the life of Christ.

This verse corresponds to verse 21.

1 Corinthians 11:21

For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

The Lord's Supper is therefore done after the evening meal. You take your own supper beforehand at home and then you celebrate the Lord's Supper with your brothers and sisters.

Celebrating the Lord's Supper on Sunday morning of course has mainly to do with the celebration of the resurrection of Christ.

Verses 21 and 34 say that it is not about a literal meal. It is not for the satisfaction of the flesh or anything like that. For that you must first eat at home. From which we rather freely conclude that the celebration of the Lord's Supper among the Corinthians had degenerated into a meal for the satisfaction of the flesh. They called it an agape meal, also designated with the word agapē.

That is not what it should be, but apparently it was celebrated that way.

Meanwhile we still miss instructions about how to arrange the Lord's Supper. We remain in the dark, for it is not told.

Even more, Paul says that he will set the rest in order when he comes. He evidently did not find it worth saying more about it than he had already done. That the Corinthians needed further instruction seems clear, but that it concerns principled matters that all believers must know so that they can hold to them? Apparently not, and therefore the apostle does not name them either.

The only thing that remains with us about it is that Paul said that the things that were delivered to him he delivered to them. There is therefore a high degree of tradition. That is simply so in Christianity, certainly because we do not live under law. That is where it remains. Apparently we have enough of the things that are described.

As far as we know Paul was not again in Corinth. He also does not say that he is coming, but in case he comes. In English it says: whenever. It means something like: "If I come," but it is not said with certainty that he will come.

At any rate, this is the last word we hear in the Bible about the celebration of the Lord's Supper. For the rest there are naturally enough doctrinal expositions about the church. For those who are rather less sensitive to that, however, this is a tremendous image. People have made it into a sacrament and thereby into a ritual. The only way to escape that is to be continually reminded of what it actually represents. Unfortunately people in Christendom have failed rather badly in that. That is because people live according to worldly principles and imported the Lord into worldly circumstances and involved Him in a power struggle. The world is saturated with that. That is the radiation, the projection of the doings of the devil himself. It is all about one thing and that is power. That is so among his personnel too. That is what governs the world and unfortunately also the historical Christendom in practice. The only thing you can do against it is to point out to one another that we do not belong there, that it is not about that. We acknowledge only one Ruler and one High Priest. We trust in His work.

The Lord said:

Matthew 23:9

"Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven".

A large part of the so-called clergy is addressed as father, pater, papa.

In short, people pay no heed to it. People claim positions that belong only to the Lord Himself. This actually means that one makes oneself an antichrist. It is therefore not so

difficult to connect the position of the Roman Catholic pope with the antichrist. That was also a very popular thought in the Reformation, which of course does not mean that he is the one who was to come. He is certainly one of the many who were to come. There are now many antichrists come. That also includes people who do not let themselves be addressed as papa.

In chapter 12 it continues immediately. You should therefore also pay little heed to the chapter and section divisions. You wonder what worthy eating and drinking is. That is set out in chapter 12. That is about spiritual things. The Lord's Supper is about literal bread and wine, but in reality it is of course the figure of spiritual things. That is then also stated.

1 Corinthians 12:1

Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

It does not say: spiritual gifts. That is not to say it does not mean that. More accurately it would have been: the spiritual things. That what follows concerns gifts is true, for that is literally stated in verse 4. Since then we speak of spiritual gifts.

In verse 1, therefore, it is spiritual things. It is a general linguistic phenomenon that the adjective is mentioned, but not the noun to which it belongs.

New Heart English Bible translates as - Now concerning spiritual things, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.

Thus you have heavenly things, but on occasion it simply says "heavenly." We then think the noun is missing and fill something in. The temptation is to insert a word that suits us. Some have done that too, for they found it rather far-fetched that our position as believers would be in heaven. When they came across the term "heavenly," they did not fill in "things," but regions.

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

Places is in italics meaning its not supposed to be there. The Christian Standard Bible reads -Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ.

Heaven itself people find rather far-fetched. Regions at any rate are not in the centre.

You have then drifted somewhat westward, but apparently it can also be eastward.

Since then people speak of heavenly regions. They explicitly no longer mean heaven itself by it. The struggle in the heavenly regions takes place in the outlying areas, not in heaven itself. Thus on the basis of such a word a very strange doctrine suddenly arises. It should not have been there.

You should have translated it as "the heavenly." Then you need not fill in anything further, for then you turn the adjective into a noun by placing an article before it.

Another example is John 3:12

If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

It was about earthly things and therefore opposite to them stand heavenly things. It is the same expression as in Ephesians 1. Moreover, of Christ it is said that He is set in the heavenly. That is surely heaven itself, as high as possible. There is nothing higher. The same applies to us; we are set with Christ in the heavenly.

Very well, it was not about heaven, but about spiritual things.

Now concerning spiritual things, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

The spiritual, the spiritual things.

They are the spiritual things derived from the tangible, visible signs from the preceding Scripture passage, bread and wine. If you insert the word “gifts,” it does correspond to what follows, but it no longer connects with the preceding. That is a pity, for that is precisely what it is about. It is about earthly things, the way of coming together, the use of the Lord’s Supper, which are images of our spiritual position, gathered around the throne of grace. That is our mutual gathering. It is not somewhere in a little hall, but around the throne of grace. That is the gathering we should not neglect (Hebrews 10:25). From that verse people have made it that it concerns the assembly in the church, but thereby this text has also lost its real meaning. We should with boldness enter and draw near to the throne of grace.

There we as believers come together and that mutual gathering we should not neglect. There is the gathering at any rate around the Lord’s Supper, but in general the gathering of believers is a figure of that. That is literal, but Paul does not want us to be ignorant of the spiritual things. He first mentions some negative things, but then he turns to the positive.

1 Corinthians 12:2

Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

I would not have you ignorant of the spiritual things, for ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols. They were conscious of that. Which spiritual things? Those dumb idols also fall under that. They have been delivered, freed from those spirits, to then serve other spiritual things.

Dumb = unable to speak. It is related to dumb, for the dumb have nothing to say and they are even dumber if they do.

Dumb has the same meaning. The dumb idols have nothing to say.

Physically it means that one cannot speak; on a somewhat higher level it means that one may indeed utter words, but they are empty in content.

Idols do indeed sometimes say something, but they have nothing to say. In chapter 10 it already stood that the Gentiles sacrificed to demons. They exist and they sometimes speak too, sometimes quite literally, but usually indirectly. Most wisdom and philosophy of man will undoubtedly be inspired by demons. Inspiration does not mean that you suddenly get an idea, but that there is a spirit that gives it to you. Another word for that is inspiration. The question is from which spirit it comes. We do not worry about that, but that it often comes from spirits, indeed.

It is said that all creativity comes from God, but then too the question is, from which God? It seems that if the answer is from the devil, it fits rather well. Whether it is always so, one does not know, for from the heart of man himself also comes a lot of nonsense. You therefore do not always have to blame the devil immediately.

Nevertheless, those spirits speak and have a message; they inspire. It is of course stating the obvious to claim that the inspiration of a man like Hitler came directly from the devil. But you can also ask how it is with other great figures in history and with the great figures of our own time. If Satan is the god of this age, then you may surely assume that the great ones of the earth are indeed inspired by the god of this age. They have

nothing sensible to say. It always leads to death. It is therefore always temporary and often still trivial. Dumb idols therefore.

They have nothing to say. That is what the Corinthians were carried away to.

If the idols are dumb idols, then this implies that our God is not dumb. God speaks, even to our days. Officially not to the world, but to us. God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son (Hebrews 1:1). His word comes to us and is brought to us.

The bread of the Lord's Supper is demonstrably a figure of that: the bread of life, namely the word of life.

They were carried away to the dumb idols, even as ye were led. That is how it went. That is how they were brought up. That was the culture of those Gentiles.

If man of himself seeks contact with higher powers, he inevitably ends up in the realm of Satan. If man, however, simply seeks the truth, then it turns out differently. Why would a man seek higher powers? Obviously to manipulate them, to set them to his hand. That is sorcery. How do you get those powers to do what you want? Some still call that prayer, but that is self-interest. If you seek the truth, then the preacher says that we cannot find it out. That is not necessary either, for if you seek the truth, then it makes itself known to you. Then the Lord makes Himself known, under the motto: Seek and ye shall find, or: those that seek me early shall find me. The latter is said of wisdom (Proverbs 8:17). Then you find the Lord, whereupon you say again: "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." He will do that too. He who is the Truth, the True One, makes Himself known to us.

Obviously not when we seek Him to manipulate Him, for then you end up with the god of this world.

1 Corinthians 12:3

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

No one can say Jesus is the Lord, or no one can call Jesus the Lord. No one can acknowledge Him as Lord. If someone acknowledges the Lord Jesus as Lord, then he speaks by the Holy Ghost.

What must these words be doing here? It is about spiritual gifts and those were already introduced in verse 1. But that was not so. It was spiritual things that are introduced. In verses 2 and 3 it is said that those who have been delivered from those idols would acknowledge the Lord, to serve Him. If you then acknowledge Him as Lord, instead of the idols, then what follows are the consequences. If you acknowledge Him as the One you serve, then you must know that He gives us certain responsibilities within that body of Christ. That is called gifts. One should employ, use those gifts.

We call those gifts spiritual gifts, for they are gifts wrought or given by the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:4 -6

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

Verses 5 and 6 are formulated in exactly the same way as verse 4, but with different words.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit;

There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord;

There are diversities of operations, but the same God.

Here the same thing is said three times.

This figure of speech, synonymous parallelism, you find very much in the Bible.

Especially in the Psalms. There the same thoughts are repeatedly repeated, but you find it throughout the whole Bible. It is a certain literary form that should be recognisable to everyone. Partly the same words and on the other hand completely the same sentence structure.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

Diversities is a multiplicity, but it proceeds from One.

The same applies to administrations and operations. At the end of verse 6 something is added: which worketh all in all.

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Gifts, the same Spirit;

Administrations, the same Lord;

Operations, the same God.

We have but one God. The Spirit is God, the Lord is God, and God is God. These three words indeed indicate exactly the same thing. The Lord is God and God is the Lord; therefore we call Him God, the Lord, or the Lord God. In the same way the Spirit is also called the Spirit of God, or the Spirit of the Lord. Although different words are used, it concerns one and the same God. The same is found in the first half of the three sentences: gifts, administrations, and operations.

Gifts.

If it is a gift, then it has been given, but what have you then received? See sentences two and three. What is first called gifts is called in the second sentence administrations.

That gift is therefore an administration = a service. A service work, a subordinate work.

Such a spiritual gift consists of a service work.

Ephesians 4:11

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

For a service work, for the edifying of the body of Christ. That is called here in

1 Corinthians 12 a gift and an administration and an operation = work. The gift is therefore a work of the ministry, exactly as in Ephesians 4 it stood. There that work of the ministry is for the edifying of the body of Christ and here it is called “for that which is profitable” (verse 7).

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient.

All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

Expedient = profitable, that which edifies = builds up.

Again exactly as in Ephesians 4 it stands: work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Believers receive one or more gifts. They receive a work to do. Not to rule over the church, or over a part of it, but to serve.

Through our English language we have become accustomed to thinking that gifts and talents are words we use to describe the natural aptitude of people. One has a gift for this, another for that. We call that talents. We have also taken those expressions from the Bible, but yet we use them wrongly. Of course much natural aptitude can easily be described as a gift, for who we are and what we can do we have to a high degree received by nature.

At any rate, you can have natural aptitude for something, but if you do not develop it, it gets you nowhere and is of no use. You can have aptitude for skating, but for that you still have to make sure you have a pair of skates. There are many people who are musical, but they have never taken the trouble to do anything with it. They cannot play an instrument, but that does not mean they have no aptitude for it. There are also many people who do play an instrument, but are absolutely not musical.

Through terms like gifts and talents we think that God gives us a certain aptitude to do something. Many gifts do indeed consist of a certain aptitude, but in the Bible the majority of gifts do not consist of that. We think such a gift is a miracle or something like that. That does occur, but it is not the rule. The gift consists of an administration, namely an operation. The gift does not consist of that you can do something, but that you should do something.

The parable in Matthew 25 about the talents describes it clearly. It concerns the situation after the rapture of the church and is therefore not really applicable to this time, but the principle always applies that people are born again through faith and then believers too will bear responsibilities and receive an operation, or an administration and thus a gift. That is described here in Matthew 25. (The parable of the pounds is more about our dispensation.)

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto...

Matthew 25:14

...a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

That man is the Lord Jesus Christ, who travels into a far country and He has servants. He delivered unto them His goods, His affairs, what was His, His possession.

Matthew 25:15

And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

Ability = if it concerns a lift and the capacity of a lift, then it is called load-bearing capacity. Ability is what someone is able to do. To every man according to his several ability, according to what he can bear. If you can bear little, then you receive little; if you

can bear much, then you receive much, for you receive according to ability, according to what you can. If you can play the organ, then you run the risk of being appointed organist for the gatherings. The gift is then not that you can play, but that you are appointed as organist. That has then become your work. That is nothing special, for in the world it works the same way. You may aspire to a job as a driver, but if you cannot drive a car, you do not get that job.

Normally you get such a job. You get it free. If you can do it, you get the job. If you cannot do it, you do not get it. Then that job is beyond your ability. That is how it works in the church too. There is therefore nothing special about it. You also do not expect of this Man, who delivers His goods, that He gives much to the one with little ability and little to the one with much ability. Then He would be a bad Master.

The gift is the job, the position. You get it. Fully it is called a career. You are set a career and you should run it. The career is free and to each according to ability.

Insofar as we consider these things spiritual, the Bible gives the image of the church consisting of vessels. The creation is a vessel, just like a man. The vessel of a new creation must be filled. The question ultimately is not how much went into the vessel, but whether the vessel was full. One has his hands full with two talents and another can easily manage those five talents. One can skate very fast, but cannot keep it up long and another cannot skate so fast, but can keep it up very long. The differences between what believers can do are the differences in the gifts one has. That load-bearing capacity can be increased, but also decreased. If you are too much hindered by circumstances, then you are less suited for the kingdom of God. No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62).

Covet earnestly the best gifts. You can strive for them, precisely to receive even more talents, if you would want to. That it is a matter of wanting or not is said in quite a few places. You can, for example, desire the office of overseer. In 1 Peter 5:1–4 it stands that an overseer should do his work, not as lording it over, but with a ready mind. He must want it. If you do not want it, then you are in any case unfit.

What in the Bible is understood by gifts does not consist of that you suddenly can do something you could not before, but that what you can do you should also do and perhaps also develop. After all, the one who had two talents gained two more and the one who had five talents gained five more. The more you do something, the stronger you become. The more often you skate, the longer you can keep it up.

A gift is that you get something on your plate as responsibility. Here it is; do business till I come.

We are not talking about miracles. With gifts people usually think of that immediately. If someone can do something another cannot, we immediately call that a gift. If it is moreover miraculous and we cannot understand it, we call it a spiritual gift. The Bible does not write about it that way. The idea is that God gives each of us a place in the whole of the church. It may well be that that place or administration still expands in the future. Otherwise you could not strive for the best gifts.

It is expected of us that we are aware that this is so. The Spirit, or the Lord, or God, does indeed give gifts. Those gifts involve service work. Subordinate and serving work. Those gifts are not identical. There are diversities of gifts, there are differences of administrations, and there are diversities of operations. Thereby it is also explained that there are simply differences among believers, at least in part. Differences exist and diversity exists, because believers simply also have a different administration, in the

service of but one Lord. Although some read three Lords here, it yet stands that it is the same. One does those administrations in the service of one and the same God, of one and the same Lord, and of one and the same Spirit.

It should really have stood:

There are diversities of gifts, but it is the Spirit Himself;

There are differences of administrations, and it is the Lord Himself;

There are diversities of operations, but it is God Himself.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today. It should really be: He is yesterday and today Himself and unto all eternity. He is the Unchangeable.

If we bear responsibility in the church, then we have received it from God Himself, from the Lord whom we serve, from the Spirit of God, or the Holy Spirit.

That gift is therefore a responsibility in the service of God, to whom we must also give account for the work we have received. Thus the parable of the talents also ends. You yet stand before the Lord and then the question is: "What have you done? Has anything come of it, or have you kept it safe in a napkin and hung a pious story on it, that God knows He need expect nothing from me. We are after all sinners and therefore can do nothing. Others say that our works contribute nothing. That is of course not the intention. We should do something with them and employ our gifts.

The synonym for gift is responsibility, for that is what you get. In what way and how far it extends and what it concerns can be a great deal. That is then also named hereafter. At any rate, the work, the administration, the gift, should be for that which is profitable, namely for that which is edifying for the church. That is very broad.

There are things we immediately consider spiritual, but there are also administrations that outwardly have nothing spiritual about them. Is setting out chairs spiritual? Is making coffee spiritual? In itself perhaps not, but you can certainly have received it as a gift from God. It is then your responsibility and thereby it is lifted to a very different level. In the preceding chapters, for example, it was about marriage and other carnal matters. Nevertheless the marriage of believers is indeed placed on a higher level, on a spiritual level, because part of it takes place within the church.

Moreover it stands that whatsoever ye do, do it heartily to God. Not for men. Then everything suddenly receives a spiritual charge, for all that we are and all that we have is of Christ. We are not our own, but bought with a price. We are the Lord's property and in that circumstance our responsibility can well consist of setting out chairs. That does not look like a spiritual work, but therefore it is still one. That actually applies to our whole life, in all that we do, even if we may perhaps discover nothing spiritual in it. We are spiritual people and placed in heaven. Everything we do, even for our earthly masters, is placed on a higher level, because we also serve the Lord in those things.

Everything should contribute to that which is profitable.

God, who worketh all in all. Some then think it is about multiplicity, but it is precisely about the unity of the church. They are not all loose parts. It is one whole. A body is called a body because the body is a unity, composed of many parts. This comes up later. For now let us leave it here.

1 Corinthians 12:7

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

To every one, in contrast to all and everyone. To every one of us is given the manifestation of the Spirit, to profit withal.

Each one of us receives something of that work. The Spirit uses us for something. He gives us a place in the whole, precisely to effect and promote that unity. That applies to us personally. One of the problems of today is that we keep hearing that we must do everything together. That is biblically also easy to defend by saying that we should be one. Yet the Bible does not teach that that way. The Bible teaches that each one of us, every one of us, has certain responsibilities towards the Lord, who sets or imposes a certain task before us.

Each one of us is responsible to employ that gift, to do what he is expected to do. He has received the job or the position and it is of the greatest importance whether he is faithful in it, so that the Lord can say when He returns: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:23). Essential is that you are faithful in what is entrusted to you.

Hence it is also logical that the sequel to this is that each one of us who has received such a gift should give account to God of himself. There are people who want to hide here behind the collective of their organisation. If you ask them about their faith, they say: "I belong to that church." You cannot hide behind the name of an institution. You cannot do that before the Lord either. Do you think you get away with it before the Lord by saying you were a member of this or that church? That is not to be nasty, but to confront you with the personal responsibility we as believers have for ourselves. You cannot hide behind anything.

In Romans 14 the judgment seat of Christ is mentioned, before which we shall appear. That is not the same as the great white throne on the last day, but the throne before which we shall appear on the occasion of the rapture of the church, to be judged there. That is why it is also called the judgment seat of Christ.

Romans 14:10

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?
for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

From the foregoing it appears that this applies to every one of us.

Romans 14:12

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Each of us is journeying individually towards the inheritance that is reserved for every one of us in heaven. That is something we all share in common, yet each of us runs his or her own race. We do not run in a group. We run alone, with the Lord. Whilst we are all doing this, there must surely be some form of fellowship.

"Unto that which is profitable" means unto edification, that is, unto the building up of the Church.

In practice, this proves to be very broad. However different the race may be for each one of us, that race has as its primary purpose our own personal formation. We are disciplined and brought up unto our adoption as sons. What one person needs by way of corrective measures, another does not need, and vice versa. The race is therefore different for each. Though we all run different races, the ultimate goal is the same for everyone: to receive an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. Yet we run that race alone. It is therefore also our own personal responsibility.

If that alarms you, well, unbelievers claim exactly the same thing. They too say that every person lives alone. Do you sometimes feel lonely? You are, and it will never be

otherwise. We have only the tendency to run alongside one another and thereby hide behind each other. In a certain sense that is quite right. If you cannot get warm, you need someone beside you to keep you warm. As believers we are indeed travelling together, but in reality we run alone. In a cycling race they ride in teams and in pelotons, but ultimately each one is racing for himself. That is the fundamental point. There may well be some mutual politicking and one helping another, but fundamentally each is responsible for his own race.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Not collectively, but one by one. That is why Paul, at least in the two preceding chapters, describes how he is faithful, or seeks to be faithful, to the Lord and to his ministry in any case. He says several times: "Therefore we faint not." He is speaking of himself and Timothy, who are regarded as the writers of this epistle. The implication is that the Corinthians do faint and pursue other interests. Paul says he cannot take that into account. He must press on. The stewardship is entrusted to me. Whether I do it willingly or not, it is entrusted to me; therefore I must. Whether you come along or not, it will not stop me.

Therefore we faint not. Therefore we do not, like so many, corrupt the word of God for gain, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Paul himself too. He takes no risks. He too must give account to God. We would do well to follow his example.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. He says this in connection with his own situation. He must give account hereafter, and so he continues to persuade men to faith. We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Paul proceeds from the gift, the responsibility, that has been given him.

Many believers do not know what to do with their own lives and wonder what God's will is for them. Curiously, those who do know what to do with their lives never ask whether it is indeed the good and perfect will of God. It is God's intention that we be transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.).

Romans 12:3

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Those gifts are at times also called grace or gifts of grace.

The grace given unto me. He is speaking of his own gift, his own responsibility. Later he speaks of the grace given unto him to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;). Elsewhere he says: "But by the grace of God I am what I am" and thus he also does what he does. What a person does largely determines his identity.

Through the responsibility given him. Not to the Church collectively, but to each individual believer in particular. He says to every man among you not to think more highly than he ought to think. One should not reach for the high things, but condescend to men of low estate. One should aim at service. To that we are called. One ought to be wise to a certain measure. It is intended that you know your limitations. It is good to know where your boundaries lie, what you can and cannot do, how far you can and cannot go.

As children we are urged on because we simply must become something in society. That is right too. Later you must be able to provide for your livelihood and find some satisfaction in what you do. That requires preparation and development. The problem is that people often remain children and always think they must still become something later. In other words, now that they are adults, they are still not mature and must still become something. Along the way, at some point you must learn and accept that you have reached your limits. That is one of the problems of growing older. If you do not yourself realise in time where your limits lie, you crash full speed into the wall.

That is generally a human problem. Certainly in our Western culture, where everyone is urged to climb to the very highest rung of the social ladder. That is not necessary at all. One should condescend to men of low estate and be content with such things as ye have (Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.). You should be satisfied with what you have. If you overstep your bounds, you take on more than you can bear, and eventually you collapse under it. That is the curse of our modern society.

If we draw that boundary too low, the Lord will certainly make it clear to us. What you do with it is your personal responsibility towards the Lord. If you say you want no more, say it to the Lord; if you want more, say that to the Lord too. No rules can be given for that, but the fact that there is a boundary somewhere is stated here.

Romans 12:3

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

God draws a line and says: "Up to here; no more is given you." If you wonder where that boundary lies, it is stated right after, but you tend to read over it. God determines the measure according to your faith. Here again, when you encounter the word "faith" and do not know what it means, you substitute "faithfulness." Now you know what the measure is: the measure of faithfulness. The measure is according to how faithful you are, or can be. That is not quite the same. Some people want to be faithful but cannot, for instance due to practical circumstances. There are circumstances we should not get into because we cannot bear them. That has to do with capacity. This is not a handle for an excuse not to be faithful; on the contrary. It is an excuse if circumstances prevent faithfulness. Be that as it may, the essence of ministries is that one should be faithful. Then it must be a ministry to which one can also be faithful. Someone who is confined to a wheelchair will certainly not be given the ministry of setting up chairs in the hall.

Romans 12:4

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

A body consists of many members and is a composite unity. In that body there are many members because those members do not all have the same function. Function, ministry, gift.

Romans 12:5

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Romans 12:6

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us...

Divers gifts, divers ministries, divers operations. According to the grace given to us.

Grace is not only unto forgiveness of sins, but also includes that we are given a race to run. God gives us a course out of grace.

The call that follows is that if you have a gift, you should actually use it. You are given the responsibility to do something, so do it.

Back to 1 Corinthians 12.

1 Corinthians 12:7

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

The manifestation of the Spirit = the working out of those spiritual things.

To profit withal = unto that which is profitable, unto edification of the Church in the broadest sense of the term.

Here it is not a listing or explanation of how spiritual gifts work, but rather it concerns the misuse of at least certain gifts in Corinth. You notice that naturally as you read further in this chapter and then into chapter 14. From chapter 14 it appears that the meetings in Corinth were chaotic. Chaos and disorder alone do not contribute to anything edifying. We shall discuss that later. Here it at least explains how Paul sets forth various things, pointing to the unity and thus the coherence of the Church over against the incoherent and disorderly behaviour of the believers in Corinth.

We then largely have to do with gifts that were given in those days but are no longer given in our days, simply because they are no longer needed, for whatever reason. That theme is actually discussed in chapter 13, though people usually pass over it and pick out other verses from that chapter to characterise it. You can see that from the heading above the chapter: the more excellent way of love. That is part of it, but there is rather more to it than that alone.

When gifts are named, first so-called sign gifts are mentioned, which can only be practised if one has first received a certain ability through divine intervention.

That ability is not the gift itself. The gift of prophecy consists in the man having to prophesy, for that is the command. Yet something underlies it. You cannot do it just like that. In short, the Lord Himself is involved therein.

Someone who has the gift of healing must first not only have received the command to practise it, but also the ability to do so. From that comes the idea that the ability itself is the gift. That is not so. That is a misinterpretation of the chapter as such.

The abuses that existed certainly arose from an improper and disorderly use of gifts in general, but of these sign gifts in particular. So they are at least traditionally called.

There are more gifts than only the sign gifts. The so-called sign gifts are no longer given. They had a function only in the first generation of Christianity.

The Bible states that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (Romans 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.). In other words, if someone

received such a gift, he had it for life. That is still the principle in general. In practice it means that those sign gifts, given in the first generation of Christianity, died out in the next generation. God no longer gave them. As said, that is a separate subject. It had to do with laying the foundation of the Church. That foundation was laid by the apostles and prophets. Once the foundation has been laid once, no other foundation needs to be laid. This means we no longer have apostles and prophets. God no longer gives them. In Corinth Paul had laid the foundation, and let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

Those sign gifts appear in biblical history, in the book of Acts, but not as often as you might suspect if you only knew 1 Corinthians 12. It is mentioned only on certain occasions. Of course they may have been used more often without being recorded. Nevertheless, those sign gifts served to authorise the preaching. They served to demonstrate that the preaching came from God. Nicodemus said that no man can do these miracles except God be with him, and thus he said to the Lord Jesus: "We know that thou art a teacher come from God." He knew that because no man can do these signs except God be with him. Nicodemus was therefore willing to accept the teaching of the Teacher because the signs and wonders proved that teaching came from God. The rapid spread of the Gospel in that first generation of Christianity naturally had several causes, but one of them was those signs and wonders done in those days. After that it ceased.

Prophecy = God Himself speaking. The prophet is supposed to be a mouth. For now it holds that God has spoken. He says that if anyone adds to or takes from it, He will add to him the plagues written in this book and take away his part out of the book of life (Revelation 22:18-19 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.). So there is nothing more to prophesy. God has nothing more to say, unless He wishes to repeat Himself, but why would He? He has written a book. We have that book. We should let ourselves be instructed by it, and nothing is to be added thereto.

Moreover, God would be silent and heaven would be shut up and He would hide Himself. That is illustrated in an Old Testament picture, in the appointment of the council of elders of Israel under Moses. That council of elders is in any case a picture of the Church. They received the Spirit; the Spirit of Moses was also placed on them. Then they all began to prophesy, but afterwards no more. Even if you do not see that council of elders as a picture of the Church, you should still understand that what was initially customary later ceased to be customary. They remained that council of elders, but only on that very first day or days did they all prophesy, but afterwards no more. The idea that God always works in the same way is a misunderstanding.

The expression "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" does not mean that God keeps giving those gifts or callings; He gives them and does not take them back. But the people who received them have died, and with that the gift was also gone. Their responsibility too. That is characteristic of our Church age. The complication of this chapter is that it describes a situation in that first generation, in which particularly those sign gifts were prominently present. The problem was that when the believers in Corinth came together, a bunch of prophets immediately began speaking all at once, and those

who could speak in tongues did so all simultaneously and right through each other. That is described. The peculiar thing is that Paul does not then say they should draw up a decent liturgy for every meeting or appoint a church council to bring order. He points every believer individually to his own personal responsibility. So it still ought to be. To every man is given the manifestation of the Spirit...

1 Corinthians 12:8-11

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will .

You must not make the mistake of thinking that we have here a list of the spiritual gifts. There is a booklet entitled *The Nine Gifts of the Spirit*, drawn from this passage of Scripture. That title is incorrect, for although you find nine here, in other passages of Scripture you find other lists with different numbers. It is always varying. Moreover, the descriptions of the various gifts also differ each time. Sometimes there are similarities, but they are certainly not identical.

What we have here, therefore, is not a list, let alone a complete list. It is by way of example.

There is diversity. Not everyone's responsibility is the same. There is no complete list. Furthermore, such a complete list would imply that it concerns only those miraculous gifts which we can reasonably enumerate: prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, healings. Everything not mentioned in connection with these falls under the term "powers"—that is, the workings of miracles. And that would be it. The whole point is that it is not such a list. Moreover, from verse 28 onwards we read:

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:28).

The first three are still numbered. This sequence corresponds fairly closely with Ephesians 4, where evangelists are also mentioned.

Here we already depart considerably from the so-called miraculous gifts. What are helps, and what are governments? Moreover, it states that they do not all have the same gift. They are not all apostles, they are not all prophets, and so on. There is simply difference.

In the list of four in Ephesians 4 you find only apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers. There is no mention at all of miraculous gifts there.

Insofar as those miraculous gifts caused problems—and that was the case in Corinth—the problem resolves itself naturally, because those who have those gifts, and thus also those who misuse them, eventually die. After that, it is a done deal. That is why you do not read about them in other epistles either. We shall discuss the cessation of those gifts rather more fully later.

It still concerns that one Church, that one Lord, that one God, that one Spirit who gives gifts to each one, and those gifts are different.

In verse 12 we have not advanced a single step. Verse 11 ended with: dividing to every man severally as he will. That means that our human organisation contributes nothing

to it, nor detracts from it. You may well establish a certain denomination, with a certain church order and division of functions, and perhaps even a list of what those functions might be; the Lord pays no heed to it whatsoever. It is as he will. And here it comes again...

many, are one body: so also is Christ .

Implicitly: so also is the body of Christ.

Many members, but there is only one body. The body also has but one Head, or one blood, or one Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:13

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

We all also, by analogy with the members of a body, are baptised by one Spirit into one body.

For the occasion, "one" has not been translated as "a certain" but has been given two explicit acute accents, thereby giving it even more emphasis. That is fine and clear. We have all received one and the same Spirit. We have received one and the same life. In Romans 5 it is explained that natural people fundamentally all have the same life, namely the life of Adam. We Christians too have all received the same life, namely the life of Christ.

The members of my body are members of my body because my life is in them. More graphically, the members of my body are members of my body because my blood is in them. If that blood no longer reaches certain parts of the body, those parts naturally fall away from the body.

We are members of one body because we share the same blood, the same life. It still concerns the blood from the previous chapter, only now it is called Spirit. John says: And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one (1 John 5:8).

Baptised into one body = baptizo = unification with. Here it obviously has nothing to do with water. We have become one plant, one living organism with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection.

Whether we were Jews or Greeks, whether we were bond or free according to the old man, we have come to share in the same body, leaving behind what once separated us when we were still Jews, Greeks, bond, or free. Those things undoubtedly caused division among the Corinthians.

The so-called baptism with the Spirit is nothing other than that we are baptised by one Spirit into one body. All the other instances where baptism by the Spirit occurs come from John the Baptist, who said: After me comes One who will baptise you with the Spirit, or with the Spirit and with fire. We are identified with Christ, and thereby we share in what is called the body of Christ. That body is one. It is not a unity we must bring about organisationally, but one that has come about organically. The body of Christ is not a unity through organisation, but an organism. You can therefore add nothing to it; you can only detract from it. You can deny and oppose the unity. The most obvious way to deny that unity is to act as though we must bring that unity about. By doing so, you imply that the unity does not exist. We, however, do not strive for unity; we live from it. At least, we endeavour to do so. That is why we are also not inclined to recognise

denominations. If you do that, you are denying the unity that exists. We are one in Christ, and insofar as there are church walls, we pay no heed to them. Many of those institutions are entirely well-intentioned, but you must nevertheless proceed from what the Bible teaches about it, and it says that we are one.

The Lord Jesus prayed in John 17 that they all might be one. That prayer has been answered. To answer that prayer, we have all received the life, the Spirit, the blood of Christ. We must realise that. From there we ought to live and towards there. That unity in Christ carries consequences with it. We should endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit. In practice, of course. The unity exists, but in practice it can be denied. We should endeavour to experience and guard that unity in reality. If we are talking about denominations anyway, we should beware of establishing denominations.

The other side of the matter is, of course, that if you do not recognise those walls anyway, you can also become a member of them. If that is desirable for practical reasons, then of course you may do so quite happily. Why not? Just as among believers you are sometimes obliged to divide certain tasks among yourselves, so you can naturally also share in this way, but for the sake of unity. It is also not forbidden to be a member; they are simply not named as such in the Bible. There is but one unity, and that is in Christ.

You can also become a member of the pigeon fanciers' association. That is not biblical either, but you may certainly become a member of it. As long as the unity of the Church suffers no detriment from it, there is no harm done. In practice, however, it is often rather more complicated. It is your own responsibility. Can you run the race that the Lord has set before you? Fine. Is there something hindering it? Then clear it up. Is something specific required? Then do it. Whatever it may be, but proceeding from this unity of the Church. That our paths diverge here and there can only be because we have different ministries. We should not interfere further with that. What the foot must do, the foot must do; and what the hand must do, the hand must do. The hand must not interfere with the foot, and vice versa.

The Church is indeed one, but the members do not all have the same position and responsibility, for we as believers have received a variety of gifts from one and the same Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal, as he will.

In the list of gifts from verse 8 onwards, we are dealing with the gifts as such; and from verse 28 onwards it concerns the recipients of those gifts, those who are expected to use those gifts. There they are even numbered—at least the first three. After that the numbering stops, and he further mentions miracles, gifts of healings, helps, governments, and diversities of tongues.

In any case, there are two different lists.

After that there is a very brief one in 1 Peter 4:

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 4:10-11).

It is a ministry in a subordinate position.

If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. In that you at least recognise the apostle, the prophet, the teacher, and possibly the evangelist, whom we have not yet encountered here.

Here the list consists of only two. Of course it is rather summary, yet only two are named, even though it really concerns the gifts. When they are specified, they fall into two categories. One category is those who should speak the oracles of God; the others should serve from the strength God supplies. With that you have the complete list, divided into two groups that are not further specified.

After that we have another list in Ephesians 4:

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Ephesians 4:7).

That gift is to a certain measure and within certain limits.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11).

The gift itself is not named as given to someone, but here the gift is someone given to the Church. In that respect, this list corresponds most closely with the list in 1 Corinthians 12:28.

Here only four gifts are named, all relating to speaking the Word. That is therefore the first category from 1 Peter 4: those who should speak the oracles of God. That also brings us to the simple conclusion that everything that happens in the Church through the various gifts, and that God allows to happen in the Church, primarily concerns speaking the words of God. Insofar as the Word of God is not spoken, those activities are at least subordinate to it. If in 1 Timothy 3:15 it is said that the Church is the house of God and the pillar and ground of the truth, then it will be clear that the responsibility of the Church is to preserve the truth (that is, the Word of God). The Church is the place where that truth must be preserved, defended, practised, and ministered. Everything else that is not directly related to the preaching of God's Word is subordinate to it and serves it. After that the whole matter ends.

We can of course think of things that might be useful, things we do not directly associate with the Word of God, such as pastoral care or social care, the diaconate, but that is a misunderstanding.

We are part of a society, and because it is a society, it means we also bear a certain responsibility for one another. That is no different in the Church, but that is not what it is about. It concerns the work that the Lord would do in the Church. About that you find nothing else in the Bible than that the Lord desires to educate, discipline, instruct, and lead the believer, with the aim of his or her adoption as a son. All that the Lord does to that end, He does through His Word. He has also promised that He will make all things work together for good to those who love Him, but fundamentally, what He does, He does through His Word.

In the Church the Word of God stands central. That is the instrument God uses. It is even more fundamental. God is Word, and if He does something, then He speaks. The works of God come to expression in what He speaks, in what He has spoken. That Word therefore stands central.

Those who preach the Word are named first in all those lists, and sometimes they are named exclusively, as in Ephesians 4. Everything else is subordinate to it and should contribute to it.

Those who preach the Word are rather precisely categorised. In 1 Corinthians 12 we read: first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers. In Ephesians 4 we read: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers.

In church tradition we scarcely know the distinction between these four gifts. We believers come together, and someone speaks, and that is it. How it should then be named, we do not further concern ourselves with. Sometimes preaching is done in rotation, sometimes by chance. Nevertheless, the Bible does categorise them, though it must immediately be said that of the four named in Ephesians, we now have only two left. In our days we no longer have apostles and prophets. You know what then happens: they are named in the Bible, but we no longer know them, and so there are vacancies, and so there are people who appoint themselves apostles or prophets. Such things happen. You can call them that, but is it biblical? No, God does not give apostles and God does not give prophets. The short explanation for that is this...

The house of God is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;). Once that foundation has been laid, building can continue upon it. After the foundation-layers have done their work, you no longer need them for the construction of the house. When their task is complete, they can go home. You no longer require them, and that is why they are no longer present. Paul had laid the foundation in Corinth. Apollos did indeed come afterwards, but he did not come to lay the foundation. For everyone else the rule applies: "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." That foundation was laid in the past by the apostles and prophets. Apostles were those individuals who at that time were personally sent out by the Lord Jesus Himself. "Apostle" means "sent one" or "messenger." The translators chose not to render the word, because they too held that an apostle is not to be understood as just anyone who is sent, but as someone sent by the Lord Jesus Himself.

Prophets, although not sent personally by the Lord in the sense that the Lord appeared to them, have from of old been regarded as receiving the Word directly from God, under the heading: "Thus saith the Lord..." When God has finished speaking, He speaks no more. If God sends prophets with a message and they have delivered the message, He does not send prophets again. Well, He did do so a few times, but then He stopped. The only truly sound reason is that He has nothing more to say. God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son (Hebrews 1:1-2). He still does so through His Word. In the initial period of our dispensation, God did indeed send prophets, if only to reveal those hidden things from the Old Testament, to remove the veil that lay over the Old Testament, and at any rate to inform us of what sort of thing this is to which we belong. Once that had been accomplished, it ceased. Nowhere does Paul say that we should listen carefully to the word of New Testament prophets. He insists that we should hold to the Word of God, and he refers to that. The New Testament prophets referred extensively to the prophets of the Old Testament.

These gifts are no longer present, and several others besides, for precisely the same reason. When God made His Word known, Paul says that God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will (Hebrews 2:4). Here the reference is to the preaching by those who themselves received the Word from the Lord. That was the first generation. God bore witness along with them, but when that first generation no longer

carries out that work—simply because it has died out—then the bearing witness with signs and wonders and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost also ceases. What was once authorised by God through those signs and wonders and the like does not need to be authorised again. When God, through these signs and wonders—which were done chiefly by the apostles and possibly by the prophets—confirmed the word preached by them, in the sense that He Himself bore witness and it was once proved that the word of the apostles and prophets is the Word of God, proved by the signs that accompanied it, the matter is proved and confirmed. It does not need to be repeated. We are not yet in 1 Corinthians 14, but speaking in tongues is a picture of how in our days the Gospel is preached to the Jews by people of “other lips” and “strange tongues.” Once that has become reality, that sign can well disappear. Moreover, it was a sign for unbelievers. We therefore have nothing to do with it in any case. God has not taken back those gifts, for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (Romans 11:29), but after that it is over. The problem is that there are always people who present themselves as apostles and prophets and think that their word carries authority. They think they can govern the world, or at least their local church. God has, after all, revealed this or that to them—but that is not how it works. God speaks to us through His Word. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Here too you miss any reference to these so-called miraculous gifts. In Acts you still encounter them occasionally in the historical narrative, but in the epistles you hear nothing more of them. They are mentioned here in 1 Corinthians and in Ephesians 4. Ephesians speaks of the building of the Church as a temple and links the foundation to the apostles and prophets.

Since God no longer gives those gifts, in Ephesians 4 we are left only with the gifts of evangelists and pastors and teachers.

Pastors and teachers are not two different functions; it is one. A pastor is a good description of the work of a teacher. In the list they are also regarded as one. The flock is cared for and fed by the Word of God, which is ministered by the teacher. People have singled out the word “pastor” and given it the meaning of pastoral worker. Not that such things are unnecessary, but the Bible is not speaking of them here at all. Besides, everyone knows that social care belongs to the diaconate. The teacher is expected to be responsible for the food the sheep receive. It should be added that the shepherd cannot force the sheep to eat; he can lead them to green pastures and still waters.

1 Corinthians 12:8

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

Here it is suggested that wisdom and knowledge are two different things, with one standing for theoretical knowledge and the other for practical knowledge. The amusing thing is that people cannot agree which word stands for theoretical knowledge and which for practical. One is the knowing of facts, and the other is applying that knowledge in the practice of life.

“Word of wisdom” and “word of knowledge” may mean that that knowledge and wisdom are conveyed through the word. That is not necessarily so, for “word” does not stand

only for speech but also for principle, programme, plans, blueprints, structures, and so on.

Logos = word, thoughts, ideas, formula. It concerns a whole thereof.

Those terms therefore do not merely indicate the passing on of knowledge about very limited matters, but structural knowledge, coherent wholes. How things fit together and form one whole. That also makes sense, because this passage of Scripture is essentially about that: the different believers who are nevertheless expected to form a coherent whole.

1 Corinthians 12:9

To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

This would be the only Scripture passage that says God grants someone faith. That would not be so bad were it not that the Bible teaches extensively the other way round: that faith is expected not from man by God, but from man by God. Men are persuaded to faith. Faith is trust, and when you come to faith, you place your trust in the Lord and in the Word of God. That trust is not given to you by God, even though certain circles teach that it is. Faith must be given, they say.

In practice they have two texts for this. One is this one, and the other comes from Ephesians 2.

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: If you read no more than this, then there is nothing for it but to conclude that faith is a gift that God gives. With that we have covered all the Scripture passages used for this purpose. This one falls away in any case, because “that” refers not to faith but to the whole: being saved by grace through faith. It is the salvation that is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.[Continuing from the discussion of the purpose of preaching:]...sinner and of the world. That is therefore not so. That is a very important fundamental New Testament truth. The Gospel is not preached so that the world might be converted, but so that the Church might be built, which moreover at the end of the course itself disappears from the world at the time of the rapture of the Church. The result of that will be that there are then no believers left in the world at all. Insofar as they were there, they have been taken away.

The work of the evangelist is a work unto the building up of the Church in a quantitative sense, and the work of the teacher is a work unto the building up of the Church in a qualitative sense. The evangelist does a work by which the Church expands. The teacher takes care of the internal building up, qualitatively, so that believers may grow in knowledge and grace and however else it may be termed.

The work of apostles and prophets overlaps to a large degree. In both cases it concerns speaking the Word of God. The work of evangelists and teachers also overlaps to a large degree, for the preaching of the Gospel is of course also a kind of teaching. You make people acquainted with something they are supposed not to know, or you try to persuade them of something about which they have their reservations. That is exactly what a teacher also does. Only the direction in which it happens is different.

In the epistle to the Romans the Gospel is set forth from the ground up, in which Paul explains the basic principles of the Gospel, but it is not preached there; it is taught there

to the believers in Rome. However much the Gospel is discussed there, it is not evangelism.

God does a work through His Word, done from within the Church. Not only by those who speak, but also by those who in other ways support that proclaiming work. That work therefore has fundamentally two different sides. One side is the proclamation as such, and the other side is the teaching of the Bible as a whole. The Bible is a far greater whole than merely the Gospel. God has far more on His programme than the salvation of an individual sinner, however important the latter may be. There are simply things that far transcend the interest of the individual person.

Here it is not so much about explaining the meaning of all those gifts, but rather about indicating their diversity and that they are given by one and the same Spirit, however different those gifts may be.

It still concerns the unity of the Church.

1 Corinthians 12:11

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Not as we will, but as he will. This statement makes it impossible to arrive at an organisation of believers in a local church. It is the Lord Himself who gives gifts. Believers are expected possibly to recognise those gifts and acknowledge them in others, for that is how it is spoken of there.

1 Corinthians 12:12 -13

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

However different we were by nature, we are all baptised by one Spirit into one body. And we are all made to drink into one Spirit, with the Spirit presented as a liquid. This is the only verse where this expression occurs, baptised by one Spirit, apart from the words of John the Baptist. The baptism in, by, with, or whatever preposition precedes, the Spirit, occurs seven times. This is the seventh time.

The preceding six times the expression occurs in the words of John the Baptist. What then is it to baptise with the Holy Ghost? There is only one answer to that, and we find that answer here in 1 Corinthians 12:13.

If you have been baptised by, in, with the Holy Spirit, then you have come to share in the body of Christ. Even more strongly, you have become part of the body of Christ. Spirit is life. The Holy Spirit is holy life, but more specifically, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and thus it is the life of Christ that we have received. Where that life of Christ is in each one of us, there we are expected to be one whole and thus to be joined in that one body of Christ.

You could say that even a human body, consisting of many members, is one, because there is but one spirit in it. If that seems too abstract, then substitute "spirit" with "blood," for it carries the same meaning. It is the inward principle; it is life. Wherever the blood flows into all our bodily parts, those parts are indeed ours. Wherever the blood no longer reaches certain parts, those parts no longer belong to our body. They fall away of

their own accord. If the circulation in the body is no longer sound—which tends to happen rather often in older age—it usually begins in the feet and later in the legs, so that sometimes toes must first be amputated, and later perhaps the feet as well, or even the legs. If they are not amputated, they will in time fall away naturally—at least if you have not already succumbed to blood poisoning in the meantime, which would kill you outright.

There is one Spirit in us, and if the Spirit of Christ is not in us, then we do not belong to Him. Wherever that Spirit is in us, there the one life of Christ is in us, and we are therefore members of His body. Someone who has been baptised with the Spirit is therefore part of the body of Christ. And conversely, if you are a member of the body of Christ, then you have received the Spirit. It cannot be otherwise.

Moreover, in connection with chapter 10:1–2 we have already established once that the word “baptism” essentially carries the meaning of unification. Baptism does not mean only immersion, but unification with. When it is baptism in water, that is because you become one with that liquid. We come to share in that one Spirit. He comes into us, and thereby we come to share in the body of Christ. In that body the Spirit dwells and works. We are all baptised by one Spirit into one body. That is also the thrust of

Romans 6:3

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

If you understand what baptism means, then it is all quite straightforward. It is unification with. The next verse explains it.

Romans 6:4

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

We have come to share in Christ, and therefore we are reckoned to have died, been buried, and risen with Him. That is expressed here in the word “baptism.”

Romans 6:5

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

“Planted” in the sense of a living organism. We have become one plant with Him. That is the same as being baptised into Him.

1 Corinthians 12:14

For the body is not one member, but many.

That is the definition of the concept of body. A body is a composite unity and consists of many members or parts. So it is also with Christ. There is no mention here of water baptism at all. It is baptism into Christ. Water baptism is a picture of that. It therefore makes sense to speak of these verses in connection with water baptism. You must simply not draw the wrong conclusion and say that this passage is about water baptism, for then you might conclude that if you have not been baptised with water, you are not part of the body of Christ. That is of course not true, for we come to share in Christ by faith alone.

The expression “baptism with the Holy Ghost,” or “with the Spirit,” occurs seven times:

- Matthew 3:11 ...he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. Fire is a type of the Holy Spirit.

- Mark 1:8 ...he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.
- Luke 3:16 ...he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.
- John 1:33 ...the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.
- Acts 1:5 ...ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.
- Acts 11:16 ...John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

All six times with reference to John the Baptist, who said these things. After that you arrive at 1 Corinthians 12:13. When the expression is connected with a liquid, it means immersion; otherwise it means unification with. That is naturally also the case with a liquid.

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

That is the same Spirit from whom we receive gifts. We are all made to drink into one Spirit.

For the body is not one member, but many

.It is repeated many times and now explained in rather a straightforward, even banal way. It is discussed here on a very basic level. You could perhaps even use it in a children's club.

1 Corinthians 12:15

If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

When thinking of members of a body, one thinks first of hands and feet.

1 Corinthians 12:16

And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

Eye and ear are different, yet they have a corresponding function. In this case both are senses. Hands and feet also have a corresponding function. They relate to our practical life, to our going and coming, to our actions and conduct. They are different and appear to have nothing to do with each other, yet they belong to that one body and are necessary for that one body.

1 Corinthians 12:17

If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

Not all believers are the same. Nor do they all have the same function. If they were all the same, they could not together be called a body, precisely because of that diversity. If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? If you have no nose, you cannot smell. It is all rather obvious, but there is nothing to contradict it.

The problem is that some take it very seriously and consider themselves an ear, or a foot. Some even consider themselves the head. Since the head is not mentioned here, this body is therefore a body without a head. Therefore, they say, this is not the body of which we are part—the Pauline body of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.

Therefore this church here in 1 Corinthians is a different church, or a Jewish church, for in our case Christ is the Head, and if Christ had been the Head of this, it would surely

have been mentioned. Nothing could be more foolish, yet there are people who take this in deadly earnest.

Paul is not here assigning functions, excluding that of the head; he is simply saying that the functions are different and that one must not interfere with another in that regard, for the coordination of eye and ear and hand and foot surely all comes from the Head. There are also theories that claim if you are the ear you are closer to Christ, because then you are part of the Head, and that is Christ. If you are a foot, then you are far removed from Him and occupy, apparently, a low position. Such theories can only arise if you do not know your Bible, if you become fixated on the idea that you must organise the Church. That is far too narrow and far too foolish reasoning.

1 Corinthians 12:18

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

As we all have a place in the Church. It is to be hoped that it is clear that there is absolutely no reference here to what we call a local church. There is but one Church, and it is not local. If you are a minister in, say, the Reformed Church, that function is usually limited to the local parish or district, whereas in the Roman Catholic Church a priest is not merely a priest in the place where he lives. He is a priest wherever he may be in the world. In that you still find traces of the idea that there is but one church. So it is. If you have received a position in the Church, then in principle it is a responsibility that applies wherever you may be.

All those ecclesiastical discussions in free circles and in organised institutions about relations between local churches are a completely unbiblical notion. Those various gifts in the Church are necessary for the building up of the Church, but naturally also for the building up of the individual believer.

Moreover, our interaction with one another serves the function of social control. That is to say, we measure ourselves against one another. We learn from one another what is customary, what the Lord does, and how the Lord works in different people—even in people who are different from us—and how the Lord nevertheless uses them. We should also encourage one another to draw near to the throne of grace because of our mutual assembling. It is unhealthy for a natural person to distance himself from his fellow men in general. It is likewise very unhealthy for a child of God. It is a foolish notion that the Lord would do a work in, on, and through us completely independently of others. He uses others for us and uses us for others. That is the idea of a people, of a family, of a household, of a body.

1 Corinthians 12:19

And if they were all one member, where were the body?

As already said earlier, if there were not all different members, there would be no body at all. A body is after all a composite unity.

1 Corinthians 12:20

But now are they many members, yet but one body.

“But now”—after this exposition.

There are many members, various members, different members. Nevertheless they form one body.

1 Corinthians 12:21

And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

We need one another. Paul makes absolutely no effort to explain how these things are organised or function technically. He does so only by means of examples. Thus we cannot be tempted on the basis of this chapter to arrive at some ecclesiastical organisational structure or the like. You cannot find it here. Functions are given in the Church, and he indicates by means of examples how that works. He does so figuratively. Paul explains only the principle. How it works in practice cannot be prescribed, because by definition we do not live under prescriptions.

Moreover, the functioning in the Church is to a large extent culturally conditioned. How it functions therefore depends on the circumstances in which we live—what is customary and what is not; what is possible and what is not. Here we hire a hall where we can meet in complete freedom. In other parts of the world that is an absolute impossibility. Those things too make it impossible to lay down prescriptions about how the Church must function. We have only imagery. We should know what sort of thing the Church is, and moreover we should discern what our individual place in it is and what our individual responsibility is. The body of Christ functions much as the human body does. There are many members, and they all need one another. When it says, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace (Romans 10:15), you might rather have expected it to say, How beautiful are the lips, or something similar. The lips, the mouth, the throat, and the tongue must do it, but the feet must carry that mouth somewhere. The mouth therefore needs the feet. That is how it works.

Paul is still operating on that basic level. It almost seems like children's evangelism. The members of the body cannot do without one another. That truth too has suffered over time. Nowadays people speak of the individualisation of society. Everyone lives for himself. You scarcely encounter other people any more. There are also believers who want nothing to do with other believers. They go into their inner chamber, pray there, have their Bible there, and that is enough. When in time they come out of that inner chamber, not much more comes from them than confusion of tongues. That was not how it was meant to work, and so it does not work either. If you are misanthropic, you may set that up as an ideal and think you can manage alone, but you cannot. We form part of a community. That means you meet regularly, interact with one another, and thus mirror one another. That does not mean you take one another as the standard or set yourself as the standard, but we do interact. In that way you discover that others experience things just as you do, or quite differently. You talk once more about biblical matters and correct one another. Not because we set out to do so, but that is how it functions in practice. Then what you call a society arises.

1 Corinthians 12:22

Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

Precisely the bodily parts we tend to disregard are necessary and do indeed have a function. Those of whom we do not have such a high opinion are necessary—even in the negative. A certain form of opposition or friction is not in itself wrong. It serves to

sharpen one another, to keep one another alert, so that we realise what really matters, what is important and what is not.

1 Corinthians 12:23

And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

Man has adorned himself since time immemorial. He or she also knows what his good side and his bad side are. The blemishes are masked. So it is here too. What it comes down to is that we as believers should respect one another. Whether we consider one another important or ourselves important is not the issue at all; we all have a function in that body. Whether it is a great function or not, we can do little about it, for the Lord gives us that function.

1 Corinthians 12:24 -25

For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

Spiritual gifts involve receiving responsibility. One is given something to bear. Here another term is used: that the members should have the same care one for another. Once again it is not about an ecclesiastical organisation. The various members are all called to care for one another—for everyone. The limitation is that in practice this cannot always be done. Where the opportunity arises, there should be, as with the Lord, no respect of persons. That is not the last word, for there are of course also Scripture passages that tell us to turn away from certain members—even not to greet some. There is indeed difference, but where we are reckoned to be children of God and to serve the Lord, there this fellowship must exist.

There are also some among us who have absolutely no intention of serving the Lord. One must therefore be cautious with them. The devil, in general, also seeks to get us, through pious stories, to take care of matters that are not worth such care at all and serve no purpose whatsoever. Taking care of those brothers and sisters who have no intention of contributing anything at all to the work of the Church, on whatever level, is something we should not allow ourselves to be carried away by, for that is not unto the edifying of the Church.

Paul demonstrates this also in Hebrews 5 and 6. There too it concerns believers who are children and wish to remain so. Paul says he will pay no further attention to that. We are now going on and will press on unto maturity, for it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have fallen away, to renew them again unto repentance. Paul cannot allow himself to be held back by that, and so he simply presses on. Children—fine. They must be guided, and care must be taken for them, but believers who insist on remaining children are ballast in our own ministry and can even hinder our own growth. Where the boundary lies depends on your own ministry. You must determine that for yourself. There are no prescriptions for it. You are only given a few black-and-white pictures, but in practice it is usually rather grey.

There are things that must explicitly take place within the Church, yet you may not occupy yourself with them at all, because it would be at the expense of your own ministry. That is why there are other people who then do those things. That is one great advantage of the diversity in the Church.

In Christendom, all responsibilities have primarily been shifted onto the minister. If he cannot manage it, then it is shifted back to the church council, so that the poor elders have to go out and set things right—though they are usually not equipped for it either. That is then shifted responsibility. In reality, we believers ourselves are individually responsible for our own lives and, where applicable, responsible for caring for others, without any respect of persons. If you think you are going to serve the Lord, it usually begins at this rather earthly level.

Be that as it may, it concerns care for one another, unto the building up of the Church. After that, our responsibility may develop or take a specific direction.

In Acts you read that the original twelve apostles from the beginning were involved in rather worldly matters. They were involved in the care of the poor among the believers. It is normal for believers also to care for one another at that level. That work was to some extent coordinated by the twelve. It was recognised that this was not really practical, for the twelve had as their primary responsibility the preaching of the Gospel. All those social circumstances were hindering them from ministering the Word. Thus deacons were appointed for that purpose, although the actual word “deacon” does not appear in Acts 6. The point is that tasks are divided and indeed fall to those who are equipped for them—or better still, to those whom the Lord Himself has appointed to them.

There should be care for one another, that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

Schism = division = tearing apart.

“Schism” is the solemn ecclesiastical term for division.

The members should have the same care one for another. Not the church council, not the diaconate, but the members. That this is indeed intended is evident from the following verse.

1 Corinthians 12:26

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

If in practice we are joined to one another and are conscious that we are one great family, because the same blood is in us, then it means that we are not left unmoved when there are members who suffer. Some are afraid of that and therefore do not wish to become attached. They do not want to bind themselves to others, have no friendly dealings with one another, and especially no obligations towards one another, because they fear that it may one day come to an end. The intention is that we as believers should interact with one another without that fear. There is no fear in love, writes John, who is surnamed the apostle of love. We are one great family and should live as such and care for one another as such.

1 Corinthians 12:27

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

This verse is a conclusion. This is what I have said to you hitherto: Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. We are individual members of the body.

In that Church God has given certain functions.

1 Corinthians 12:28

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

In general, people speak rather vaguely about the various gifts. Although that is true, certain matters are then mentioned with great emphasis. That is the case here. We have already compared those lists of gifts; we shall not do so again.

God has given some one of these gifts—not all.

First apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers. We have compared this with Ephesians 4. The pastors are missing here, but pastors are teachers, and so they are not really absent. Here the evangelists are missing. The distinctive function of the evangelists is that although they are given to the Church and their function aims at the extension of the Church, their ministry is directed outward. They preach the Gospel not to and in the Church, but outside it, to the ignorant and the erring. They therefore have no function in the church gathering. That is probably why they are not mentioned here. A list of three. After that no more numbering: after that miracles, then gifts of healings, and so on, for after those three there is certainly no longer any order or ranking. The first three are numbered. That makes them specific, with a specific job description. Moreover, they probably also stand in order of importance, but certainly also in chronological order. The whole matter indeed begins with apostles. First there were the twelve disciples. From one day to the next all believers are suddenly called disciples, and the twelve are then called apostles.

There is an important difference.

Disciple = follower. They followed the Lord Jesus. Later they were called apostles, simply because they were sent out by the Lord. That is how it all began.

Secondarily prophets. Alongside the apostles we find prophets mentioned in Acts. Paul too was warned by prophets not to go to Jerusalem. The apostles themselves, after Christ's resurrection, also received the function of prophet in addition. The Lord had said to them: Take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. When the time came, Peter stood there: And Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost.... Then he becomes a prophet and makes statements one would never have expected from the man. We are now accustomed to it, but historically one would not have expected it.

And not only that: they also acted as prophets, in the sense that through them the well-known miracles and signs were indeed performed. Lame men healed, and so on. Of Paul you even find, as with the Lord Jesus, that people touched his clothing or even caught his handkerchiefs, whereby they were healed. That is typical of the manner of prophets, of people directly appointed by God, more or less outside the written Word, directly. The prophets were not by definition personally sent out by the Lord Jesus. They were prophets as prophets were in the Old Testament.

Thirdly teachers. Teachers are expected to speak the Word of God. Their source is the Bible. Teachers after all give instruction in biblical truth.

We no longer have apostles. They have died out—except in the Apostolic church. You know how it goes. When they are no longer there, a vacuum arises. When it concerns

people, we call that a vacancy. There is always someone who jumps into the vacuum. He fills the gap in the market.

The same has happened with the prophets. They have not existed since the first generation. And so the same thing happens as happened with the vacuum of the apostles. You always get people who present themselves as prophets and have the audacity to say: “Thus saith the Lord...” and then say something. In the most favourable case they say something themselves, but sometimes it is someone else who says something (a demon). It does not make much difference, for you need pay no attention to either.

As regards the gifts of healings, quacks have always existed, and people always die in the end. Ultimately medical science is always powerless. It can sometimes hold out for a long time, but in the end it must give up the fight. The patient too. When nothing more helps, there are always people who still know something. Then you just have to pay a lot, and something is arranged. Within Christendom that is then called the gifts of healings; outside it is simply quackery, or, if people still have confidence in it, alternative medicine.

Doctors also just do what they can, and in general they too have the idea that there are methods they cannot understand but which nevertheless work. And if it works, it works. That is how it is with them too.

With the gifts of healings one must always ask whether it is from the Lord. Usually such a healing does not succeed. The question then is why it does not succeed. And why does it go differently from in biblical times? In biblical times, if someone who had never been able to walk was healed, he stood up and went leaping home joyfully. You will never see that in medical science or quackery.

The apostles were expected to preach the Word of God.

The prophets were expected to preach the Word of God.

The teachers were expected to preach the Word of God. They do so mediately—that is to say, the written Word of God comes in between. The prophet says: “Thus saith the Lord...” The teacher says: “It is written...” That all these people are used by God and that the Holy Spirit works through them is true, but the same applies equally to all the other gifts there are in the Church. Whatever ministry we have, we should do it in His strength: in the power of the Lord, or in the power of the Spirit, or however it may be called. That applies to the minister, but just as much to the sexton. But to call the teacher a prophet straight away—no, he is not.

After that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Governments = occasionally something must be arranged among ourselves. It certainly has nothing to do with lordship, for all these gifts are serving functions.

1 Corinthians 12:29

Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? In verse 28 the emphasis is on “some,” while here the emphasis is on “all.” Those gifts were intended for some. Not all are apostles; not all are prophets; not all are teachers, and so on.

1 Corinthians 12:30

Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

The answer is no. Even then, when those miraculous gifts still existed, it was for some. All those gifts that exist, and insofar as they still exist, are not for everyone. Nevertheless...

The More Excellent Way of the Gifts

The fruit of the Spirit is...Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance...The fruit of the Spirit is love and everything that belongs with it. That is the fruit, the result, and therefore also the characteristic of the life of Christ in us. Individually, of course. That is why Paul sets aside the gifts of the Spirit for a moment and speaks about the fruit of the Spirit.

Its comparing a Christmas tree and the cherry tree. On the Christmas tree hang presents, and on the cherry tree hang fruits. When fruits hang on the cherry tree, that is proof of the life of the cherry tree. The gifts on the Christmas tree prove nothing about the tree. In essence the Christmas tree is as dead as a Christmas tree. With all those gifts you have no proof of spiritual life.

That is also one of the strangest objections we have to the Pentecostal movement. In general it is thought there that the gifts they believe they possess are proof of the work of the Spirit. That is not so. The fruit of the Spirit is not gifts, but love and so on. If you have received a gift from God, whatever it may consist in, the gifts of God are without repentance. If you have it, then you have it. Certainly in those first years, when those miraculous gifts still existed. One received that gift. If afterwards one went astray or took a wrong turn, one simply retained that gift, but it is no proof of spiritual life.

Jakob also always used to say: "If you want to know whether I am filled with the Spirit, then you should ask my wife, because the fact that I stand here speaking is no proof of that. That is the exercise of a gift." That is also what is written here.

1 Corinthians 13:1

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Very impressive, apart from whatever is spoken in those tongues.

You may know a great many tongues of men and speak the tongue of angels, but if you have not love, it is a great deal of noise and very little wool.

1 Corinthians 13:2

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

Love is of course the summary of the fruit of the Spirit. Everything listed in Galatians 5:22 is an outworking of love. Love proves itself in the other things mentioned there, and so you can summarise it simply as love. John does the same. He scarcely occupies himself with those other things, but almost solely with love. Paul does much the same here, as a summary of the fruit of the Spirit.

Love here is the expression of fellowship, of communion, but that is stated abstractly and statically. If it must be expressed more concretely and practically, then love is

service. Love is practical fellowship and expresses itself in serving one another, in caring for one another.

A great deal is always made of the biblical concept of agapē, to such an extent that we even use the Greek word to indicate that we understand agapē in the Bible has a rather special meaning. Unfortunately in practice people often still fail to grasp that special meaning.

Agapē and the Hebrew ahavah stand for practical service to one another. It is not the expression of holding warm feelings for one another. That is philia. Philadelphia = brotherly love.

Agapē is not about feelings, but about a practical attitude to life. In fact, agapē—that so-called highest concept of love—means that in principle you choose to care for one another. The idea is that where you live in that way, the warm feeling for one another—philia—develops of its own accord.

Affection means that one inclines towards another, but you can simply choose that. That is why the Bible more or less calls us to choose to love one another. That is possible, because you can simply choose to care for one another. Where you live in that way, the sense of fellowship arises naturally.

In our modern society we have elevated love to the highest norm. People then think that if you love one another, you ought to marry, or at least enter into a long-term relationship, regardless of sexual orientation. If those feelings are no longer there, you simply part again. That, however, is not the biblical idea. In biblical times, just as in many cultures still today, you had no say at all in whom you would marry. That was arranged by your parents, or by someone who knew about such things and was hired for the purpose. That is called a matchmaker. You may find that strange, but the very idea is that where you are bound to one another and can no longer get away from each other, you must simply take it as it is and make the best of it. That is then the intention: to make the best of it. The love, the warm feelings, come naturally from that. Love is a product of the relationship and not its source.

We are saddled with the legacy of so-called Romanticism. In that period love was placed above everything. You went—and still go—to marry only if you love someone. Those warm feelings are usually just a matter of hormones. They therefore disappear rather easily. You should not simply take love for granted either. Everyone knows that something must be done about it. If you want to maintain your relationship, you must work at it. If that is so, then it also means that work can be done to bring it into being. Moreover, we as children of God are bound to one another and are expected to love one another. That means it ought to arise. That love is not there by nature most of the time. You must be able to place these concepts properly in their biblical meaning.

It should also strike you that in verses 1 and 2 the gift of speaking in tongues and the gift of prophecy are mentioned in succession. Those two gifts have much to do with each other, because in both cases one speaks under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:4

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

From this you can conclude that the Spirit by definition speaks. The whole Bible is therefore produced by the Spirit of God, or inspired by the Spirit. The apostles began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance. If you read it that way, you are simply dealing with prophecy. It is more than that, because they do it moreover in other tongues which

they had not learned. That, however, changes nothing. Whatever you do, it remains prophecy if you speak what the Spirit gives you to speak. It is prophecy, with the particularity that it happens in other tongues, which was a sign of our present dispensation, in which the Gospel would be proclaimed by people of other tongues and other lips. For example in Greek, for the whole New Testament comes to us not in the Hebrew of the Bible, but in Greek, in a Gentile language. That is not without reason.

Acts 2:11

...we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

They spoke of the wonderful works of God. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation (Hebrews 2:3)? That is what it was about. It concerns the wonderful works of God, the great salvation, those works of God that are so marvellous that one would not believe them if they were told (Habakkuk 1:5; Acts 13:41).

In short, they prophesied. Prophecy is often accompanied by all sorts of strange, wonderful things, also in the Old Testament. Speaking in tongues is therefore also prophesying, but in a special way.

From chapter 14 it appears that prophecy is the highest gift, because it concerns speaking the words of God directly. That is why it says...

1 Corinthians 14:1

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

The gift of apostleship no longer comes into consideration as the highest gift, because that gift was reserved only for the twelve apostles and Paul, and so prophecy remains as the highest gift.

From verse 2 onwards speaking in tongues is discussed. Paul writes about it that it is all very well, but that no one benefits from it. That is the drift of at least the first half of chapter 14. Thereby speaking in tongues is in fact degraded to the least gift, because it has the least usefulness. It is better to speak in your everyday language so that everyone can understand. The intention is that what is said should be understood. If that is not the case, then it is completely pointless. That is what it says. Although prophecy and speaking in tongues are closely related, prophecy is regarded as the highest gift and speaking in tongues as the least.

1 Corinthians 13:2

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

What then is the purpose of prophecy? That through it all mysteries are revealed and all that is to be known. Where speaking in tongues in Acts 2 is prophecy and the speaking of the wonderful works of God, here in prophecy too the wonderful works of God are spoken. Perfect prophecy means that all the mysteries of God are revealed. That would actually happen in and to the Church. Nevertheless Paul says that even if he had that gift (by which he does not say he does not have it) and had not love, he would be nothing.

If you have faith in the sense of trust and reliability, then you can indeed remove mountains. The question is whether you should take that literally. The question is moreover why you would ever need to remove a mountain. When it comes to mountains and removing mountains, you naturally arrive at a mountain that would be cast into the sea—namely Babel. That too is figurative, for Babel does not lie on a mountain. The

mountain is the picture of a king or kingdom. That mountain would be cast into the sea. Babel would disappear into the ground. The kingdom of the Antichrist will be destroyed and exist no more for ever.

Removing mountains = doing the impossible. For that faithfulness is needed, perseverance. Holding fast to your principles, holding fast to your goals, going for it. Then you can indeed remove mountains.

Here there is a reference to the word of knowledge and the gift of faith from verses 8 and 9 of the preceding chapter.

But anyway, if you have those gifts and have not love, then you have nothing at all. It is not about the gifts, but about the fruit of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 13:3

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Burned = think of the persecutions of Christians. Quite a number of people were burned for their faith. It would have profited Paul nothing if he had not love, for it is not about all those outward things; it is about the fruit of the Spirit.

People who give away a great deal of money often do so to quiet their own conscience or to buy a place in heaven. Among Roman Catholics that is more or less obligatory. There are also people who do such things in public so that they can boast about it. If you do it only for that reason, it means nothing. It concerns love, fellowship, the desire to serve one another.

In the following verses you find a description of what love is, but you could just as well say that here you find the fruits of the Spirit described in practice. In Galatians 5 you find the abstract concepts; here they are described in practice.

1 Corinthians 13:4

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

Love holds out long.

Love is kind = the good thrives. Then there is not merely incidental good, but always.

Kindness is therefore synonymous with longsuffering. The Lord is longsuffering; the Lord is kind. Not for the occasion, but always.

Love envieth not = love is not jealous. If you love one another, you wish one another the best, even when the best is already there. Then you are glad that someone is doing well. Love envieth not. The whole world hangs together on envy. That is in practice the basis of ethics. That is of course meant ironically. The whole world turns on envy. People do not wish one another well.

Love vaunteth not itself. That is done with deliberation. When love acts, it cares for one another and that is done thoughtfully.

Love is not blind. If love is blind, you had better not call it love. Love is not blind, but love is loyal despite what you see.

Love is not puffed up. In puffing oneself up one presents oneself as greater and finer than one is. That is bluff. When people fall in love, they flirt; then they present themselves as finer than they are. We know that from the animal world, but love is not puffed up. It does not need to present itself as greater. Moreover, if you love, you are serving and therefore actually humble. That is the opposite of puffed up. Pharisees who

parade their religion are puffed up, just as the dropsical man was puffed up. The Lord wrung him out. The man was full of unprocessed things and was very proud of it. Knowledge can also make one puffed up. Not necessarily, but it happens. One then parades it. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth (1 Corinthians 8:1). That is the difference between being puffed up and being built up.

Puffing up also has to do with leaven. Leaven puffs up the dough. It does not become more; it only seems more. Later it sinks back down of its own accord.

1 Corinthians 13:5

Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

If something is seemly, it takes its place. Then it is arranged, it is suitable and stands exactly in the right spot (table arrangement, flower arrangement). If you have love, you also know your place. If you know your place, that usually means it is a humble place. Love seeketh not her own, but that of others. One should not be self-centred, but other-centred. That is therefore service.

Love is not easily provoked. That again connects with longsuffering.

Love is not easily provoked, in the sense of becoming embittered or disappointed. Of course there are disappointments, but so what? You simply carry on, because you are faithful.

Love thinketh no evil. More precisely, the text says: love reckoneth not evil. The evil is there, but it is not imputed. One does not hold it against anyone and therefore does not call anyone to account. One takes a humble position, after all. It is the higher who call the lower to account, not the other way round. When one has love, one serves, and therefore that does not happen.

1 Corinthians 13:6

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Truth is that which binds, that which makes one. There is but one truth.

The lie is here named as iniquity.

Where love unites, it therefore rejoices in the truth.

1 Corinthians 13:7

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

To bear (or cover) is to reconcile. Blessed is the man whose sins are covered. They are there, but they are not imputed.

Love believeth all things = one remains faithful, despite the wretched circumstances, despite those things that nevertheless must be covered. The evil is not imputed, despite the iniquity in which one does not rejoice. If you love, then you are faithful. That is why marriage is also described as faithfulness. Marital faithfulness is really two times the same thing. It is about remaining faithful under all circumstances and remaining bound to one another. As believers we stand in a position in which we should care for one another.

Love hopeth all things. Positive about future things. If you love and things are not going so well, you nevertheless have hope that in the future everything will improve again. It does not always turn out that way, but you would hope so.

Love endureth all things. Love is able to overcome all adversities. John says: What is it that overcometh the world? Our faith. It should be clear that our faith and love go hand in hand. Love implies faithfulness. Love implies that it overcomes the circumstances.

1 Corinthians 13:8

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

Love endures under all circumstances. Feelings perhaps not, but you can choose a certain attitude, a certain position. You choose for the Lord. If you choose for the Lord, then it is a matter of time, and you can also answer positively to the question whether you love the Lord. In the first place you would begin by serving Him. That an emotional bond also arises from that is true. That is how it works. You must begin by choosing and not sit waiting until you one day come to love the Lord. That will not happen. You begin by serving, and then that love comes naturally. That is love on a higher level, connected with the work of the Spirit. Fundamentally it works the same way in the world. By choosing, bonds and fellowship arise—especially when those things are mutual. The drift of this epistle is of course that believers should serve one another mutually—that is, love one another.

It would have been pointless to say all this unless these Corinthians too could simply choose it. They had to. That was the intention. For that they must first know what the Church is and how it ought to function according to what the Bible itself says about it. To that we should submit ourselves and be conscious of what the Lord expects of us. If you choose to do that, then the best thing is to say it to the Lord and also ask Him to remind you of it regularly. He will do so. That is how it goes. In the beginning it may be difficult, but that is simply how life is. All beginnings are difficult. Gradually you learn something, and so you come to maturity in the world—but so too as a Christian you come to maturity. That does not happen if you withdraw into your inner chamber and think you can manage there alone, for that is not how it works. That happens in the fellowship of believers, in which not everything goes smoothly and not everything happens of itself. Nor is that the intention, for the intention is that we should care for one another and therefore bear with one another. We would probably not do that by nature, but we do it anyway, because we are family to one another. Because we are united in Christ, one in the name of Jesus, with all the consequences thereof. Thus we should grow up into Him. 1 Corinthians 13 is a description of what the fellowship of believers looks like in practice. The writers of the New Testament books always have something of a problem in that you simply cannot prescribe the law to believers. We do not live under the law, after all; we have been delivered from it. Nevertheless, there have been norms and values underlying our behaviour since time immemorial, but words like law and ethics must be avoided. The problem is how then to tell what that life looks like. Roughly like this.

If our life is governed by love—which is after all the most excellent way—then it is as follows. Love is longsuffering and kind. Do not be mistaken: we who bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, or in whom the Spirit bears fruit—the Spirit who transforms us in the inward man—produces this. We ourselves do not really even know what love is. We must describe it and never quite get to the bottom of it. Moreover, the definition of love is culturally conditioned. But of course we do not really need that whole definition. What

matters is that that love should be in us and grow, as the result of God's work in us. The result of a God who is after all love.

And so the mature believer is longsuffering, kind, not envious, and does not behave unseemly; he is not puffed up and does not behave himself unseemly. He does not act out of order, for a mature believer knows his place. Then he is seemly in the arrangement. He seeketh not his own, for love is not self-centred and therefore neither is the believer. The mature believer is never embittered. He thinketh no evil—that is to say, he expecteth no evil. He does not reckon with it. That does not appear in his dictionary, for we love one another after all. That means the mature believer is also naïve. He does not impute it to the other, but he also does not reckon that others are occupied with it. He rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.

If you understand that this is a description of the mature believer, then it is much easier to grasp, for what are you to make of love rejoicing in the truth? That becomes clear when you realise that this is about a mature believer. The idea is that as we come to understand the truth, to that degree we also rejoice in it. It follows from that that we as believers by definition seek the truth. We rejoice when we find it. Of course, fundamentally we have found that truth. The truth is Christ—but do we also know Him? The Word of God is also the truth—but do we know that Word of God? The answer is probably no. The other question then is whether we are even interested in it, for you would at least expect that of a believer. Where we find the truth, there we rejoice in that truth.

The mature believer beareth all things, covereth all things, reconciles all things. He believeth all things, in the sense that he trusteth all things. Faith is trust and trust is faith. Trust is characteristic of a mature believer. He hopeth all things and endureth all things. That is four times all things. It speaks of the rather disappointing circumstances of life in general, but as mature believers we cover those things and believe in the promises of God, from which we live and therefore we hope. Faith and hope are concepts that belong together—not only because they are mentioned in the same breath in this chapter, but because faith is faith in the Word of God, which speaks of the future. Of course God also speaks of the past and of the present, but what is characteristic of the Word of God is that He speaks of the future. The biblical idea is that God has done this and that in the past, which should be sufficient guarantee for us of the future about which He speaks. God does not simply say that He will do wonders in the future, but that He has done wonders in the past. He has demonstrated them. Well then, He will do so in the future also. That is where we are headed. You find it demonstrated in the Bible too: when the future is spoken of—concerning the coming again of Christ and all that is connected with it—then the prophets regularly refer back to the past. Deliverances that God brought about in the past may have been historically significant, but they are pictures of far greater deliverances that God will bring about in the future. In short, faith in the Word of God is to a large extent also faith in the future.

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. “Now”—we have just come from chapter 10, where it says that believers should live by faith. That means faith is the foundation of our whole life and our worldview. If you then wonder why faith, then what is written in Hebrews 11:1 stands. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. When we believe what God has spoken, then we have hope for the future, because God has spoken about the future. By definition. That is what the Word of

God is about. That He sometimes spoke about the past is because people are rather forgetful and inclined to forget history, with which the wonderful works of God are also forgotten. Sometimes the prophets bring one thing or another back to remembrance. Faith is faith in what God has spoken. That concerns the future. If we therefore trust in the Word of God, then we are certain of the future.

Hope is expectation of the future. That could be a negative expectation—namely the expectation of judgements, which by the way are also announced in this epistle to the Hebrews. Without any addition, however, hope is always positive. That is the case here too. We who live by faith do not expect judgement, for if we believe in the Word of God, then we believe that he who believes cometh not into judgement. Not now and not in the future. We have hope, a positive expectation of the future. Paul says to Titus that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. That is our hope and nothing else.

If we do not believe what the Bible says, then we also have no hope and certainly no firm foundation for our expectation of the future. That we do have it comes because we believe what God has said. If you do not yet have that hope, then it is because you do not know what God has said. That is of course the importance of knowing the Scriptures; thereby you come to know God, and thereby faith is built in the same God who has spoken. Then hope is no longer uncertain, but certain.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen.

Evidence = exactly the same as substance. They are things we do not see, for faith cometh by hearing, by that which is communicated to us. It is therefore evidence and substance of things not seen.

“Things not seen” implies that they are things one does not yet see, for our hope is that those things we have so far only heard from the Word of God we shall yet see in the future.

What was our blessed hope? The glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. That it concerns things one does not yet see is what the rest of the chapter is about, in which examples are given of people who firmly believed what God had said. For example...

Hebrews 11:7

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Being warned of God = God had spoken to him.

Things not seen as yet = those things did not yet exist then.

Moved with fear = he reckoned with what God had spoken.

Hebrews 11:8

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

He did not yet see it, he did not yet know it, he could not yet imagine it. That is the idea. In short, we let ourselves be taught by God. He speaks to us and promises us this and that. You had best believe it, for that is the foundation of our practical life: trusting in God. If you believe what God has spoken, then you also hope for those things. That is expecting with certainty. Owing to a lack of knowledge of English, some do not know

that “hope” means “expect with certainty.” Why else would the anchor be the symbol of hope? The anchor that entereth into that within the veil. The anchor that is fixed in the present position of Christ, who is seated on the throne of grace as King and High Priest after the order of Melchisedec and therefore the Fulfiller of all Old Testament promises, in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen.

It is not merely that we expect something but are not certain. That has become the meaning of hope in simple English. Hope has become something we do not know for certain, but hope is that we do know it for certain. Hence an anchor.

Hebrews 6:18-20

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Our hope is firmly anchored in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we have become mature believers and the Spirit produces fruit in us—summarised under the concept of love—then we believe all things, then we hope all things. This concerns the things about which God has spoken. On the other hand, we cover all things and we endure all things.

1 Corinthians 13:7

It beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. This verse is an introversion (or chiasmus). That is to say, it begins on a negative note, then turns positive, positive again, and ends negative once more.

“It beareth all things” corresponds to number 4: “endureth all things.”

Number 2: “believeth all things,” corresponds to number 3: “hopeth all things.”

The central items are positive: believing and hoping. These pertain to the Word and to the work of God.

We have just had a lengthy description of what love represents, and now follows the contrast between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. That, after all, is what the passage is ultimately dealing with.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

Love = the fruit of the Spirit.

Charity never faileth. The Spirit is eternal, and what the Spirit produces is spirit and therefore eternal. It never faileth. It abides.

Then follow some of the gifts of the Spirit:

Prophecies: they shall fail;

Tongues: they shall cease;

Knowledge: it shall vanish away.

No further spiritual gifts are mentioned here.

As regards knowledge, this is not merely general knowledge that one has acquired, but the gift of the word of knowledge referred to in 1 Corinthians 12:8 “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;”

All three items in the list are, after all, spiritual gifts.

Each of the three involves either knowing things or communicating things. In the case of prophecies, something is spoken in order to impart it. With tongues, it is still a matter of

prophecies that convey content. Something is uttered. That was also true on the day of Pentecost: they heard the apostles declare in their own languages the wonderful works of God. So here too something is being communicated. The gift of the word of knowledge likewise means that a person knows something—probably without it having been conveyed through ordinary channels. One simply knows it. How? Perhaps by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The text does not say more.

In any event, with the gift of the word of knowledge one knows something, whatever it may be.

Of all three gifts it is stated that they will come to an end. In chapter 14 the gift of prophecy is declared to be the greatest, the highest spiritual gift. From the remainder of the chapter it is clear that speaking in tongues is regarded as the lowest of the gifts. Yet they belong together, for they are very closely related. In both cases there is direct transmission of the Word of God. God speaks through the prophets, and if He does so in a foreign language, it remains the same, for He is still speaking through the prophets. But what precisely does the text say?

Charity never faileth. That is the chief thrust of this portion of Scripture, for the passage is concerned not so much with the gifts of the Spirit as with the fruit of the Spirit.

Prophecies, however important that spiritual gift may be, they shall fail. This does not mean that the prophecies themselves will vanish and that nothing will come of their fulfilment. Some read that meaning into it and claim that God has frequently prophesied things and then gone back on His word. In the first place they have not read the text correctly, and then they conclude from it that God does not keep His Word. For instance, they read that God would destroy Nineveh, yet in the end He did not, and therefore God went back on His word.

But then they have not read it properly. Some also genuinely believe that if people pray hard enough, the great tribulation will pass us by, and if people pray hard enough for the peace of Jerusalem, Jerusalem will surely not be destroyed. It is plainly stated in Scripture that Jerusalem will be destroyed, but just as Nineveh was not destroyed after those forty days, so Jerusalem will surely not be destroyed either—if only we pray hard enough for the peace of Jerusalem, since that is written in

Psalm 122:6

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.”

There are also those who say that much was prophesied in the Old Testament concerning Israel, but since Israel was unbelieving, God does not fulfil those prophecies or promises. Oh no? Well, one must interpret them figuratively, and then they are fulfilled spiritually in the church. In a certain sense that is true, but that does not exhaust the matter. In any case, that is not the point here. The passage is not speaking about the prophecies themselves, but about the gift of prophecy. The act of prophesying will be done away. That cannot possibly apply retroactively, for what is done cannot be undone. It simply means that there would come an end to the gift of prophecy. The only counter-argument one might raise is that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. God therefore fulfils them. That is indeed correct, but it means that in times past God gave prophets who remained prophets until their death, but after that it ceased. If God does not grant that gift of prophecy anew to the succeeding generation, then there is no more prophesying, because those prophets have by now passed away. That is precisely what has occurred. One may argue at length or briefly, but if one simply reads the Bible it is plain that an end would come to prophecy. The same phenomenon

appears in the Old Testament. At the institution of the council of elders over Israel, all seventy elders prophesied, but afterwards they did not. It served a one-time purpose. That council of elders, incidentally, is a striking picture of the Church. The text does not state it explicitly, but with a little Bible study one comes to understand that it is so. Moses led Israel. The priest—Jethro, moreover the father-in-law of Moses—advised that Moses should not lead the people alone, but should appoint elders among Israel. Those elders already existed. That is the basis of the birthright. There are heads of families, heads of clans, and heads of tribes. Elders therefore exist, and where elders exist they can be appointed and acknowledged. Where they do not exist, one must do without, for one cannot designate people as elders when they are not.

Numbers 11:16-17, 24-25 :

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone. ...

And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.”

Of course this happened historically, but at the same time it is a powerful depiction of the calling of the Church in our own day. Read Acts 2. The Lord Jesus was the first to receive the promised Holy Spirit from the Father, and through the Lord Jesus—or from Him, or by Him—we receive of His Spirit (Acts 2:33 “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”). That is why the Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of Christ, and why we are called Christians. We as the Church are regarded as elders, firstfruits, for the Church is a church of the firstborn. Those are elders. Moreover, they are firstborn in relation to Israel. In the divine order, God is the Head of Christ, Christ is the Head of the Church, and the Church stands as head in relation to Israel. Those seventy elders prophesied, but afterwards no more. Precisely. At the official appointment, at its commencement (and thus at the beginning of the Church, in the days of the Acts, when there were prophets and prophesying occurred), there was prophesying, and afterwards it ceased. So it has been in the Church as well. The Word of God is now complete, and therefore there is nothing more to be said. God has spoken and has nothing further to say. It is expressly stated that no one is to add to those words nor take anything from them. Moreover, we are called to give heed to those words. There is no other source. That source is the Bible. That the Spirit leads us into it, and that the Lord gives some in and to the Church as teachers, is true, but there are no more prophets.

People have devised the following response to this: one must then broaden the concept of prophecy again. Then anyone who preaches, or whatever passes for preaching, is a prophet. There is, however, no biblical ground whatever for that notion. There is no more prophecy, but we do have the prophetic word. Moreover, the prophets who existed had the purpose of guiding believers locally, where they were and where they prophesied,

but their chief purpose was to write the books of the New Testament. With that we have everything set down in black and white, and that was the end of it. Nothing more is required. Furthermore, we live in a dispensation in which God conceals Himself and therefore in a dispensation in which He does not speak. God does not speak verbally or literally to us, nor does He send prophets, but He confronts us with the written Word. He gives us evangelists and teachers. Once what needed to be said has been said, nothing more needs to be said. Indeed, it is better to say nothing further, for that would only weaken the testimony. God has given His final Word, and that is that.

Suppose God were still giving prophets in our day. There would be a strong likelihood that the Bible would simply be set aside, because then we should have to listen to all those people saying, "Thus saith the Lord..." In circles where it is believed that God still sends prophets, that is exactly how it proceeds. There the Word of God is no longer the authority; instead it is what the "prophets" say. Anyone can claim to be a prophet. Fortunately we need pay no attention to such people and can simply hold to: "It is written..." If a so-called prophet says something in accordance with Scripture, then that "prophet" is unnecessary; and if a "prophet" says something contrary to Scripture, then he is also unnecessary. One is quickly finished with the matter—at least, if one attaches any value to the Word of God. Such prophets would undermine the authority of the written Word. God has spoken. Nothing new is to be added. Whatever future still lies before us is described in the Bible. What was still lacking in it, or veiled, is revealed to us in the New Testament prophecies—including the doctrine of the last things, the events that are yet to take place in the days of Christ's return. Nothing more is to be added to that. We should also understand that, insofar as we possess such New Testament prophecies, they do not serve as something new in themselves, but to reveal to us things that were present in veiled form in the Old Testament. That is why New Testament prophecies certainly cannot be interpreted in isolation. If one attempts that, one inevitably goes astray. They are themselves explanations of, and applications to, Old Testament prophecies. We often understand those poorly—not only because we read poorly (which is frequently influenced by translations), but also because we do not know the circumstances in which those prophecies were written. We do not know them, yet we ought to know them, and we could have known them had we taken the trouble to become acquainted with them. Usually we do not.

Future history is indeed the continuation of Old Testament history, that which has already been. If one does not possess the old, one also does not know how to relate the new to the old, nor how the lines drawn in the Old Testament converge in the New—for if one does not know the Old Testament lines, how could one recognise them when one has only the New Testament? Then one has only Luke 21, Matthew 24 and 25, 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, 2 Thessalonians 2, and Revelation. Nothing more.

Nevertheless, it is complete in itself, and no new prophets appear to tell us what must happen next. In the shorter term, in our present church dispensation, we also have no prophets. We do have certain figures who have been of great significance to Christianity. They were not prophets, however. They were servants of God—but so are we. We all have our gifts as well. Some received, or receive, rather greater gifts, and some also accepted the responsibility that came with them. In practice that is rather rare, but that is how one arrives at "the great men."

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

The gifts will be done away. In what sense done away?

The gift of prophecy will cease. Then it is no longer present. The same applies to speaking in tongues. That is a variant of the gift of prophecy. It is prophesying, but in another language. It is the declaration of the wonderful works of God, or the speaking of mysteries. Those two gifts are set in contrast to each other in the following chapter. Speaking in tongues has no practical utility, because it is a sign. Signs do not exist for practical purposes, although some signs did have practical benefit. When the Lord Jesus healed a blind man near Jericho, that was a sign. For the one who was healed the sign had very practical value, for afterwards he could see. Far more important, however, is the meaning of the sign. The answer is that the healing of that blind man pictures the forming and coming into being of the Church in this present age, in which mankind is blind and walks in darkness, and yet here and there light nevertheless dawns, such that a Church is brought into existence, characterised by the fact that its members walk in the light.

God hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We walk in the light, as He is in the light, and have fellowship one with another. In the Old Testament it is foretold that upon a people walking in darkness the sun would arise, while the rest of the world would be darkened, insofar as any light remained.

Speaking in tongues pictures how, in our present dispensation—between the first coming and the second coming of Christ—the Gospel, or the Word of God, would be preached, or preserved, by people of other languages. They proclaim the Gospel not at all in Hebrew, certainly not in Jewish Hebrew, and indeed completely apart from any Israelite identity. The Gospel is proclaimed in other tongues, whereas the Bible, by definition, comes to us in Hebrew.

Some people reason as follows: they say, “The Old Testament was for Israel, wasn’t it? If the Lord says that He will make a New Covenant in place of the Old, then for whom is that New Covenant? So the New Covenant is also for Israel.” But it all depends on what else is said. The way the question is put is also wrong. The issue within which this kind of question is asked is not whether the New Covenant is for Israel, but whether it is exclusively for Israel. They just do not use that word. Of course it is for Israel, but it is for everyone who believes. Specifically, however, where the Old Covenant was delivered into the hands of Israel as a priestly people, there the New Covenant is also delivered into the hands of Israel as a priestly people. In both cases this does not mean that it is exclusively intended for that priestly people. Moreover, a people does not consist only of priests; Israel does not either.

The Old Covenant comes to us in Hebrew, does it not? If the New Covenant is then for Israel and comes from the same God who gave them the Old Covenant in Hebrew, in what language does that New Covenant come to us? This is an unfair way of putting the question. It is a suggestive question and that is not honest. The New Covenant comes to us in Greek. The Jews find that ridiculous. If it comes in Greek, then they do not need it. The Bible should surely come to us in Hebrew! But the Lord had said that they would not believe it and that He would therefore try it differently, not inwardly, but from the side of the Gentiles. He would speak to them in another tongue (Isaiah 28). Greek is the

language of the Gentiles. Although the thought is Hebrew and also the way of thinking, it is written in Greek.

That is precisely what it is about: another tongue. What is demonstrated on the day of Pentecost and in the first generation after that is that salvation would be sent to the Gentiles and taken away from the Jewish people. That salvation would therefore come to other people, with another tongue and another way of speaking, another culture, and another philosophy. They would come to faith. Those who lived under the law did not want salvation. Well, they did want it, but then it had to be under the law. Within the Old, however, there is no place for the New Covenant, and so the Jews rejected it. But the Gentiles, who do not have the law, were open to the gospel. That is where it went. The result is that to this day the gospel is preached to the Jews by Gentiles and actually in Gentile languages, but not in Hebrew.

It is the other way round. The norm would be that the Jews would preach the gospel, the word of God, among the Gentiles. In our days it is the other way round and Gentiles preach the gospel to the Jews. It is preached by people of stammering lips and in other tongues. That is a sign.

Speaking in tongues therefore has very little practical use. Paul's comment is that speaking in tongues is speaking in tongues precisely because no one understands it. For that reason it has no practical use at all in the church. Why it would then have practical use outside the church is completely unclear. What use is it if the fleece becomes wet at night and the grass around it dry? As soon as you have thought what practical use that has, the next question comes: what use is it that the next night the grass is wet and the fleece dry? If you answer the one question, you immediately have no answer to the other. It had no practical use either, only symbolic use. It is exactly the same story of how salvation is preached from one to the other and from the other to the one. The moisture from heaven = a figure of the word of God, comes to the nations and does not come to the fleece = Israel. Then it is the other way round. Then Israel receives the word of God and from there it is brought to the Gentiles.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

Charity never faileth. What follows therefore does fail. It states why those gifts cease.

1 Corinthians 13:9

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

Note that speaking in tongues is not mentioned, or it is included in one of the other two terms. Preaching in tongues is prophesying. Hence it is sufficient to say that we know in part and prophesy in part. In part = partially. It is not complete. It is not yet mature.

1 Corinthians 13:10

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

Usually in commentaries on this verse you read that this concerns the second coming of Christ, or heaven in the future. As long as we are on earth everything is limited. That may be so, but the question is whether that is what is said here. It says that there is prophesying and that we acquire knowledge. That is partial knowledge. That remains so until that which is perfect shall come.

That which is perfect has the meaning of what is mature. Possibly what is adult. That this is the meaning of the term appears from the following verses.

1 Corinthians 13:11

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

In these expressions one thing and another is explained. But when I became a man, I put away childish things. A child is not yet a man. When you have become adult, then you have put away childish things. Are you then rid of them? If it concerns knowledge, then you are not rid of it when you have become adult. What was then in part has been supplemented, completed to the full, to the adult. Then it is no longer half, but whole. It is also not just a matter of supplementation, although it is that, but it is more than that. Suppose as a child you know only half. Then you have half the truth. But half the truth is a whole lie. When you become adult, then you are rid of that lie. You still have that half truth, but you now also have the other half with it. The biblical thought is moreover that what you learn as a child you never lose completely, because you learn best as a child and what you learn also sticks best. It is only incomplete. As a child you do not know what is all for sale in the world. You really do not know that. You only find out later. Whether you should be happy about that as a human being? That is not the point now. It is now about the principle.

The point is namely that there is still prophesying as long as there is still something to be said. Better still, God sends prophets because He still has something to say. Then it is therefore not yet complete. But when everything that must be said has been said, it is complete and it also stops. When the child has become adult (you never know when that is), then that childhood stops. Such a person is no longer treated as a child and no longer behaves as a child, or as it says here...

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

When you have become a man, then you are no longer childish. That is what this is about. Should you think that the perfect only comes when we are in heaven, then this would mean that we only become adult when we are in heaven. Is that so? In any case not later, but the Bible emphatically teaches, especially in this Corinthian epistle, that we should already become spiritually adult now. Paul after all reproaches the Corinthians in the first chapters of this epistle that they are children and need milk and not solid food. It is after all the intention that we should become adult in a spiritual sense and therefore sufficiently taught and such things.

After all we are speaking about spiritual gifts and their use in the church. Just a moment Ephesians 4 then.

Ephesians 4:11

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;

It is a ministry so that the saints might become adult. It is a service work for the edifying of the body of Christ and thereby obviously of the members in particular...

Ephesians 4:13

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:
Till = there could also have stood “that.” There is no difference between the two words. In both cases it points to the future and thereby to a goal. In translating the Bible it is often problematic, because in the English language we make a difference between “that” and “till.” We use “that” when it concerns a goal and “till” when it concerns a point in time. In the original languages that difference does not exist. The point in time is also a goal and when the goal is reached, that is the point in time. In Galatians 4 it stands that a child is a child till the time appointed by the father. It is not about the time, but that the child should become adult. Ephesians 4:13 can therefore also begin with “that,” for that is the goal, namely that we all should come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man.

The unity of the faith corresponds strongly to the unity of the body and the unity in love. That we should come to the knowledge of the Son of God. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection (Philippians 3:10). Paul counts all things from his past as loss and dung that he may know Him. Everything he knew had to do with religion, from which you must conclude that someone who holds to religion and therefore lives under law is a child. That is also exactly what Galatians 4 says. The law is for children. They are under tutors and governors till the time appointed by the father. That is a temporary matter. As a child you ask whether you may do this or that, but as an adult you simply do and know what you must do and what you must not do. That is not a matter of having permission, but a matter of weighing and being able to make that weighing. Education has the goal of teaching children to make their own weighing and also to bear the responsibility for it themselves.

It is the intention that we become a perfect man, an adult man.

Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That is the measure of the adult man.

Ephesians 4:14

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

We should no longer be children. Not later with the Lord, but now with the Lord. Now, in fellowship with the Lord, we should grow up to adulthood. Hebrews 12 adds that if we endure the chastening (the education), God behaves towards us as sons. Then we are regarded by God as sons. Whether we can claim that for ourselves is perhaps somewhat premature. You can be regarded as an adult man, but not yourself know whether you are. That is also not for you to judge. When it concerns spiritual things, even less so. The Lord Himself makes that clear, but the Bible says at any rate that if we endure the chastening, God treats us as sons.

Moreover, John addresses believers as children, young men, and fathers. Those are the adults. They are called fathers because adults also bear responsibility for children and also stand in relation to those who are regarded as children.

The intention of that adulthood is that we should no longer be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, with doctrinal currents. The adult man is not easily fooled. An adult man has gained his experiences. An adult man has also fallen into seven ditches at once and afterwards you do not do that any more. Then you know how that goes and therefore you do not fall for it again. There are quite a few Christians who are carried

away by all kinds of currents, by the sleight of men. You do not notice that as long as you are still a child. Only around the time you become adult do you notice that dishonest motives play a role. Moreover you then also understand that you do not have to do merely with people, not merely with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. If you are an adult believer, you know that and therefore take it into account.

It is not the intention that we be tossed to and fro by, for example, all kinds of trends, but we should speak the truth in love.

Ephesians 4:15

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ;

You must first know that truth. We acquire that truth through the word of God. After that we bear it, for that is speaking the truth. We should bear the truth. That is the function of the church, which in earlier chapters in 1 Corinthians was described as a temple. The function of the temple is that the word of God, the truth, is preserved in it. In the broad sense this means that there was a whole library in the temple. Moreover teaching was given. In the narrow sense, but then it becomes symbolism, the ark of the covenant stood in the temple and in it the two tables of stone were preserved. The temple would therefore preserve the truth.

The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

Essential for believers is not whether we live neatly according to Christian norms, but whether we know the truth, preserve it, and bear the consequences of it. That is what it is about. Not to preserve sweet peace, not to avoid discussion or possibly conflict. The point is whether we are faithful to the truth. That can of course only be if we know the truth. That is also precisely the reason why so few believers know the truth, or are even interested in it. That brings responsibility with it. The general philosophical thought is by the way always, also outside the Bible but also in the Bible, that knowledge brings responsibility with it and thereby also sorrow. That is why people do not want to know. Nevertheless, God calls us to that truth. He calls us to His light. He shines with His light, with His truth, into our hearts. The intention is that we preserve that light, walk in it, and therefore speak the truth. That we therefore are not tossed to and fro by all kinds of sleight of men.

We should speak the truth in love and in every way grow up into Him who is the Head, namely Christ.

The intention is that we as children of God grow up to adulthood. It is not the intention that we spend our whole life on that, but that we become adult as quickly as possible. A child is a child, but that should not last too long. Being a child is preparation, growing up. And when you have grown up, life only begins. For children of God exactly the same applies. That we are children, fine; that we are weak in faith, fine, but everything should contribute to our becoming adult in the shortest possible time and therefore knowing and bearing the truth. That is what 1 Corinthians 13 is about.

We know in part and we prophesy in part, but who are these “we”? They are children. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. Then you are no longer childish.

Paul says, looking back:

1 Corinthians 13:11

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

All that was limited by a lack of knowledge and by a lack of capacity for full knowledge. A child is too immature for that. That is also true in a biological sense. Some things one simply cannot know because one is not yet mature.

But when I became a man, I put away childish things. What Paul introduces here is that the gifts, such as for example prophecy, speaking in tongues, and the gift of the word of knowledge, would be done away. That those gifts have only a temporary purpose, in contrast to the fruit of the Spirit, for that remains forever. In the history of the church those gifts would indeed disappear. That history was already well under way at the time Paul wrote this epistle. As far as we know the gift of prophecy only occurred during the first generation of Christianity, but afterwards no more. Even in biblical history you find that too. As far as we can ascertain, in what we call the later epistles of Paul you find these matters mentioned no more at all. You find them just barely in this Corinthian epistle and that is it. The epistle to the Ephesians just barely mentions apostles and prophets, but afterwards nowhere more. Things like healings you find in the epistles not at all, except that they are mentioned here in Corinth. But of them it is said that they pass away.

If Paul later writes a letter to Timothy, who apparently had weak health, he wrote to him that he should no longer drink water only, but also a little wine, for his stomach's sake and his often infirmities (1 Timothy 5:23). Wine was gentler on his stomach. After all, wine contains alcohol and alcohol has a disinfecting effect. Excess indeed harms, but the same applies to drinking too much water. He does not tell Timothy to have hands laid on him, or to pray, so that it would go away. And why did Paul so urgently need Luke with him? Luke was a physician and Paul needed him. He functioned as Paul's personal doctor. Everyone knows that and it is also stated in all the handbooks. You therefore no longer come across those gifts in the Bible, because they disappeared. Insofar as they were wonder gifts, they had to a high degree the function of signs, after which they disappeared again.

When Paul speaks of when that which is perfect is come, he is not speaking of heaven, but of here on earth. That also appears from the following words.

1 Corinthians 13:12

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

He speaks of seeing in a glass. We see now in dark words and see now in a glass. You should not think of the glass mirrors we have today, but of the metal mirrors of old. The idea is that such a mirror has little light strength. You see somewhat vague images and moreover distorted, simply because the mirror is not smooth enough. That is how a child looks at reality. For him it is a dark image, a dark world. He does not see through that world.

We see now through a glass, darkly, but then... when we have become adult, we shall see face to face. No longer in a glass, but directly. And guess what, in 2 Corinthians 3 it is also plainly stated.

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Not beholding as in a glass, but reflecting. We do not look in a glass, but are ourselves the glass. Glass is a noun and here it is the verb. That is not looking in a glass, but reflecting.

If we are with open face, then it is no longer dark. For we know the Lord without that veil. We know Him face to face. That is what it is called. That is not only in the future, but in the present. It is not only the intention that He knows us, but we should also know Him. Face to face = there is no veil between. It is full knowledge. The Lord said the same about His relationship with Moses. The Lord said that He did not speak to him in riddles (enigmas), but face to face. We see now through a glass, darkly. Dark is the same word, enigma. You see it but do not understand it. That is elsewhere called a veil. You do not see it clearly, for there is something between.

As children we now see through a glass, darkly, in riddles, but when that which is perfect is come, when I have become a man, then we see face to face.

Now I know in part, as a child, but then, when I have become adult, I shall know even as also I am known, face to face. Only when you are adult do you really form part of the world as such. For children of God exactly the same applies. Immaturity is a phase that should pass. We should grow up to adulthood.

Hebrews 12:6

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

That is how it was in old times. We later euphemistically called this approach educational measures, and later still forbade these measures. Hence in the practice of education not much more comes of it. The intention is that those who are seen as future sons are also educated by the Father. If He does not do that, then He apparently has no confidence in them.

Insofar as we are chastened by the Lord, it concerns education. This whole idea is taken from Proverbs 3, from which it is quoted here. The children should be educated so that they might become sons. As long as the Father still educates, He apparently still has hope, for otherwise He would no longer do it.

This also implies the idea that we should be sons while we are still on earth. That does not mean that we are now already placed as sons, for that is an official legal act that can only take place for those who are actually sons. That is the same as that you do not have elders in the church, you cannot appoint them either. If there are no sons, you cannot appoint them either. Nevertheless, the idea is that we should already become adult believers now, so that later, on the occasion of the rapture of the church, we may also be officially placed as sons by Him. For then we shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ and it will appear what remains of us.

We should know the Lord face to face. Not with all those limitations that belong to childhood, which are on occasion also called veils.

1 Corinthians 13:13

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

And now abideth = when one is adult, for the childish has then passed away.

In the standard commentaries you read that we shall know the Lord in the future, but now everything is in part. If that is the reasoning, you really get big problems with verse 13, that you can no longer explain what you must still do with faith and hope once you are later in the future with the Lord. For faith is faith in things hoped for and not yet seen. But then we shall see. Romans 8:24 says that hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? That cannot be.

Faith and hope both have to do with things one does not yet see. Those are therefore no longer there. People then explain this by stretching the concepts. Faith is then seen in general as faithfulness. In the future we shall of course also be faithful to the Lord, only such a concept then no longer means anything.

As regards hope, there is a general idea going around that we shall arrive in heaven with all our leaks and lacks. Here on earth we understood nothing of it, but in the future we shall yet grow up and flourish. There is then still hope. That thought, however obvious it may be, we do not find in the Bible. What you could have had here but did not have, you will not get there either. If we have not received glory here, have not been clothed with glory, then that will not happen in the future either. Then we stand there naked, or clothed, but the intention was that we should be clothed upon. The idea that there is still hope for something better afterwards is not there. We hope that the glory we have received here will be made visible in the future. We therefore hope for things that are not yet seen, but that are already there. The Bible says that we have already received glory, but it is a glory that cannot yet be seen. That glory shall be revealed to us in the future (Romans 8:18). That translation is not entirely correct, for in reality the glory that is in us shall be revealed. The whole creation waits for that, for the manifestation of the sons of God, for then the glory that is in us shall be revealed. Glory that we have not received beforehand cannot be revealed in the future either.

It therefore concerns our life here as children of God, whereby we should grow up in knowledge. That we learn things. That is not merely theoretical, but in every respect, so that we grow up to adulthood. In practice only one thing is needed for that, namely that we come to the knowledge of Him. Of what He has spoken and what He has done in the past, what He does in the present, and what He will do in the future. In that world we live as children of God. Not in that of the visible things around us, which we cannot understand anyway, but in those things God has given us. That is our world. We cannot see that, but therefore we listen to the word of God. First we grow up as children of God, then we are adult, are faithful to the truth, bear it. In that situation faith, hope, and charity abide. Charity stands last, because with that we are back at the subject. Paul points us to a way that is yet more excellent. That is that of the fruit of the Spirit, namely love. The gifts are subordinate to that and serve that purpose. Moreover, as regards some gifts, they are or were temporary, however impressive they may have been. Gifts are indeed profitable for the building up of the church, but they are subordinate to its purpose, namely the fruit of the Spirit, summed up in the term love.

The gift of prophecy and of tongues

1 Corinthians 14:1

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

Follow after charity, not the gifts. The word “gifts” has been inserted here again. It is not so much about the gifts, but about spiritual things in general and the responsibility that goes with them in the church.

That zeal for those gifts, administrations, operations, is a completely biblical matter. You find it also in 1 Timothy 3:1, that if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. There is nothing wrong with that. But if you are zealous for spiritual gifts, then preferably most of all for prophesying. It does not say how you should do that. The only thing one could say about it is that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God (Romans 12:1). What comes of it no one knows beforehand except the Lord. We do not need to know either, for the Lord will arrange it anyway. Of course you can also say that you are willing to serve the Lord, but not in this or that function. That is possible, but you soon come close to imposing limitations on the Lord. Something like: “I am willing to be educated, but not more than three days a week.” At any rate, it does not say further how we should be zealous for spiritual gifts. That is also no longer very relevant, especially where prophesying is concerned, for that gift has meanwhile ceased.

Moreover, the question is whether you should be zealous for the gift as such, or whether you should be zealous to practise a gift you already have. You find this thought in many more places in the Bible. As many gifts as we have received, so let us use those gifts (Romans 12:6).

What is exactly said here is a little unclear. Whether it concerns being zealous for a gift you do not yet have, or you already have a gift and the intention is that you should be zealous to practise that gift. In this chapter it is also said that one should handle one’s gift carefully. For example that of speaking in tongues. You can practise that gift, but of course you should not do it all at once, for then no one can understand what is said any more and moreover, if there is no one to interpret what you say, then it has no sense at all. This means that the one who has such a gift evidently also has control over it and should manage, or master it.

But rather that ye may prophesy. This implies that Paul considers this gift the highest in the list. He had already said that in the previous chapter, when he said that God set some, first apostles and secondarily prophets and so on. Apostles are no longer sent. That is therefore in any case no longer an issue. We also do not know entirely for sure who was an apostle and who was not. By biblical standards apostles are those who received apostolic authority directly from the risen Lord Himself. Should Timothy and Titus be called apostles? Probably not. Timothy was sent by Paul.

If apostles are no longer sent, then from then on the gift of prophecy is the most important.

1 Corinthians 14:2

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. He does not speak to men, but to God. Logically an unknown tongue is an unknown tongue because no one understands it. The only one expected to understand it is God Himself. The question is therefore what sense the practising of this gift has. You can be quick with the answer to that question, but since Paul is speaking to the Corinthians, who were not so quick of understanding, it goes very slowly.

Speaking in tongues has no use at all. What then is the function of speaking in tongues? It is a sign. Nothing less than a sign and nothing more than a sign. If the meaning of the sign is clear, then the sign has afterwards lost its function. But then we are already in verse 21. We will come to that later.

For no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

Prophets do that too. Only if you do it in tongues, no one understands it. That therefore does not get very far. What is it about then when someone speaks in tongues? In the spirit he speaketh mysteries. It perhaps stands a little clearer in Acts 2, where speaking in tongues first occurs.

Acts 2:4

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans?

8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,¹

10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

If they do that in a language usual for the hearers, then it is called prophecy, but if it happens in an unknown language, then it is called speaking in tongues.

It was speaking of the wonderful works of God. That is exactly what the prophets in the New Testament also do. The books of the New Testament, like the Old Testament books, were produced by prophets. What they make known to us are the wonderful works of God in general and the revealing of the mysteries in particular. Those are the things that were hidden in Old Testament times. They therefore speak about them, but it happens in an incomprehensible language.

Speaking in tongues, whereby one speaks in an unknown language, is the figure of the position of the Jewish people in our days, in which one does hear but does not understand. They do hear, but do not understand. They do see, but do not perceive. That is demonstrated. That is namely characteristic of our dispensation, in which all kinds of things happen, but especially the Jewish people do not see it and in which preaching also takes place, but they do not understand what is preached. Why the Jews? Because the Jewish people functions as an object lesson for, not just for the Jews themselves, but as an example for the world; how it is with the world in general. Where one is namely religious and oriented towards law and precepts.

Religion = ligare = to bind, to tie together. Think of a surgeon who makes a ligature, sews things up. Man is already bound to sin and death. If one is bound again, ligare, one is bound to what in the Bible is called a ministry of death, namely to law. Not necessarily to the Jewish or Hebrew law, but to the elementary principles of the world. If one is bound that way, then one sees no more and hears no more. Then one must, for it is

binding, hold to the precepts. Then one no longer needs to perceive and no longer needs to listen. Even more, one cannot. One then gets a very distorted consciousness of it. You can tell religious people whatever you want, but they understand nothing of it. Not that they are stupid, but when it comes to the Bible, it is sometimes downright idiotic.

That effect is demonstrated in speaking in tongues. Something sensible is said, but people do not understand it.

Another way in which that also happened in the Bible was speaking in parables. It is also said there that it had the same function. The language is not an unknown language, but yet there is something strange about it, because it is all not meant literally, but figuratively. The Lord Jesus said that He spoke to them in parables so that in them might be fulfilled the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah: Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. They had no idea what the Lord was speaking about in those parables. That He moreover did that from a little boat on the lake of Galilee, they had no understanding of that at all. That was the picture that went with it, the setting. For one day Gentiles, people of stammering lips, would speak to the Jewish people. To this day that happens, without these signs, for today it is Gentiles who preach the gospel to the Jews. Does it help? Well, here and there someone comes to faith. Some say that many come to faith. That may be, but most do not and the Jewish people as a people certainly not.

If someone now suddenly begins speaking in Swahili, that might be amusing and interesting, but it naturally has no practical use at all.

In short, he who speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not to men, but to God. No one understands him, but in the spirit he speaks mysteries. Then it must be interesting, for then it is speaking about the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. It is then about things that do stand in the Old Testament, but that are incomprehensible in the place where they stand. Those things must be read in the light of the New Testament prophets.

1 Corinthians 14:3

But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

Spiritual gifts are for edification, for the building up of the church. Speaking in tongues too, but speaking in tongues in a gathering has no function at all.

1 Corinthians 14:4

He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

If only for the simple reason that he exercises his gift. After all, it is a sign to the honour of the Lord. If you then do something with your gift, then you yourself are first built up by it and receive reward for it, glory.

He that prophesieth edifieth the church. From that you can infer that speaking in tongues falls into the category of child (who edifies himself) and prophesying into the category of adult. Adults have responsibility in the community and for others. Children do not; they must look after themselves. They must do only one thing: be a child and learn.

1 Corinthians 14:5

I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

Here again it concerns the principle of hierarchy and rank. If speaking in tongues is interpreted, then together it is again equal to prophecy.

1 Corinthians 14:6

Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

It is nice if Paul were to visit the Corinthians, but it would be of no use at all if he then practised his gift of speaking in tongues a little. No one benefits from that. People benefit more from revelation, knowledge, prophesying, and doctrine, so that in words something is actually made known. Words are for communication, but those words must then be understood.

1 Corinthians 14:7

And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

So it is not only with the living voice, but with sounds in general. If it all gives the same sound, then it has no message. Then you can do nothing further with it. There must be movement in it and difference in sound. It says sound, but it implicitly concerns pitch. It is not only about the difference in instrument, but that you play notes of different pitch on one and the same instrument and preferably not all of four beats, but also of different length. Then there must still be connection between them. That is called rhythm and possibly metre. If it must become even more complicated, then there must also be harmonies of different instruments that harmonise with one another. They do not play the same notes, but yet they fit together. There must be something of life and melody and tension that is built up, just like in language, for speaking is actually also a kind of music, with long and short notes, with staccato, with change of pitch and timbre. That contributes a great deal to the content of what is spoken. Writing and speaking are two completely different things.

1 Corinthians 14:8

For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

The trumpet is expected to blow a signal as a call to battle. If that is not done well, then no one takes any notice of it. So it should also be in church gatherings.

1 Corinthians 14:9

So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

If you do not bring a clear message, how will the hearers then understand it? It is unclear at any rate if it happens in a language no one understands.

1 Corinthians 14:10

There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

All those voices and sounds have something to communicate. There is a message in it.

1 Corinthians 14:11

Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

You can for example blow the reveille, but if the hearers have not learned what that means, then they can naturally do nothing with it. They will probably just turn over for another sleep.

Barbarian = unlearned, uncivilised.

Someone who just fiddles about on a musical instrument, that becomes nothing. He still has a lot to learn. Otherwise he had better leave it alone, for otherwise it is only disturbing.

Thus speaking in tongues is regarded. It is communication. The one who speaks must know what he is doing. The hearer must be able to understand it, or otherwise receive interpretation; otherwise it simply does not go well and you had better leave it alone. Whatever gift one has...

1 Corinthians 14:12

Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

The gifts are not an end in themselves, nor is the practising of the gifts. The goal is the building up of the church. Speaking in tongues in a gathering has no sense at all and at home, where no one can hear it, also not. There it also does not have the function of a sign that it should have. What more should you do with it then? Nothing, for once it has functioned as a sign, it is afterwards no longer needed as a sign. That is the ultimate conclusion of this only Scripture passage in the Bible (1 Corinthians 12–14) where speaking in tongues is spoken of. It ceases and has no function any more.

1 Corinthians 14:13

Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

Some call that interpretation of tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:14

For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

To pray = literally to ask someone something. In the Bible that is soon to make a request to the Lord God. Usually, however, the concept of praying is taken much broader. It is the general designation for what is done in the service to God. Praying is the most characteristic of the life devoted to the Lord. Therefore praying is used for everything that has to do with devotion to God. That is a normal linguistic phenomenon. One takes the most important and uses that to designate the whole.

Our whole life should be a prayer. By biblical standards that is also so, because in prayer our dependence on God is first expressed, but also the attachment to the one to whom one prays.

What was first called speaking in tongues is now suddenly called praying in tongues. That does not mean that it is now suddenly about something else. Also when you speak, especially when you speak the words of God, that is in the service of God. Therefore that can be called praying. "Pray without ceasing"; that does not go if it means that you ask God something. You must also do something else in between. "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands"; that would mean that we go through life mumbling and with raised hands. That cannot be the intention. Praying therefore means much more than just speaking aloud, although that word etymologically indeed means speaking aloud. But even without speaking aloud it is still called praying. It is therefore a word with a broad meaning. Speaking in tongues is praying in tongues and vice versa. It has no function in practice in the church, because the hearers cannot understand it and therefore it does not edify. If they do understand it, it ceases to be speaking in tongues. This verse suggests that those who speak in tongues do not even know themselves what they say and therefore do not understand it themselves. My spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. That also appears from the previous verse: "Let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret." Difficult, if you yourself do not know what you say. What use is it then. That is what Paul says too...

1 Corinthians 14:15

What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. "With the spirit" evidently has the meaning of "in tongues speaking." It comes from within, but what it represents outwardly, we ourselves do not know either. In the course of time people have also invented singing in tongues on the basis of this verse. The thrust of this chapter is that certain wonder gifts are no longer given by God. They have had their function and that was it. Then inevitably sooner or later comes the question how it is possible that in our time there are people who prophesy. Probably it then concerns people who say they prophesy, or otherwise have stretched the concept of prophesying to preaching in general. In the Bible that is not called prophesying. In the Bible prophesying is that someone passes on a message, usually with the mouth, but sometimes also in another way, that comes directly from God. That prophesying is not derived from existing Scripture passages, but the words come directly from God. This automatically means that the whole Bible was produced by prophets. Such prophets no longer exist. Nevertheless there are people who say: "Thus saith the Lord..." and then you get a message, suggesting that it comes directly from God. What should you do with that? Nothing. If you think that is too short a cut, then you check by the Bible whether it is indeed the word of God or not. If it is contrary to the Bible, then it does not come from God and if it does correspond to the Bible, then it is also not from God, for then you are adding to or taking from it. There thus remains nothing to prophesy. Everyone can call himself a prophet, but there are also people who say they are Napoleon, or that they are Christ Himself. There are therefore plenty of people who imagine all kinds of things, but God no longer gives prophets.

As regards speaking in tongues, what passes for it in our days is certainly not speaking in tongues as we know it in the Bible. It does occur, but either it comes from the

imagination of man, or it comes from some spirit or other, but in any case not the Holy Spirit.

The so-called speaking in tongues occurs in all kinds of circles both religious and non-religious, but it is not from the Lord. That such things occur within the so-called Christianity and are done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is easy to guess, for the devil has an interest in that. As soon as people think that God speaks directly through them, then they no longer need the Bible. That is undoubtedly also the intention of it in our days.

Some people sometimes just babble away and call that speaking in tongues. We cannot judge what they say, therefore we can only judge what the Bible says about it. The Bible says what it is and what it is for. It is speaking in a language one has not learned and whereby one apparently also does not know oneself what one says. In that language the wonderful works of God must be spoken (see Acts 2). They are existing languages, but languages we ourselves do not know.

At any rate, that gift has had its time.

Usually it is so that people who speak in tongues no longer need the Bible and moreover come with the strangest theories. They also no longer have interest in the Bible, but trust in the power that seems to work through it, which they suppose is the Holy Spirit. They have enough of that. The intention is that we should be led into all truth and not that we should occasionally produce some sounds in gibberish or Swahili that we ourselves cannot understand either.

It is sad that such things occur. We must understand that these things are no longer an issue in our days. Insofar as they were still an issue in the days of Paul, he says that it should gradually come to an end. For it does not contribute to the building up of the church and that was never the intention of that whole sign either. It had another function. Thereby you come to things outside the work of God in the church, which lie outside our personal life sphere and most believers have no interest in that either. In practice they are usually not interested in the truth, but only in themselves. It often flows from that they themselves think they are the truth and exalt themselves to the norm.

Some, precisely because they are believers, push reason aside. For it concerns faith and not reason. That is of course complete folly, for we believe with reason. We should also give understanding to the word of God. Faith does not go outside our understanding. Moreover, when we came to faith we made a very reasonable choice. It is not just feeling or something against better knowledge. Unbelief is against better knowledge. Although one knows better and can know better and sometimes even has known better, one chooses unbelief.

1 Corinthians 14:16

Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

If you give thanks in tongues.

He that occupieth the room of the unlearned = you cannot understand what is said. You do not know his language. You have not learned it.

Those who sit at a thanksgiving are expected to say Amen to that thanksgiving. They cannot do that if they do not know what is said.

It does not say that you must say Amen to someone else's prayer. Of course you can agree with that prayer, but that does not necessarily have to be aloud. You cannot agree with a prayer that is spoken in a language you do not understand. If the hearers cannot understand that prayer, then it need not have been spoken so well and he could have done that prayer at home.

1 Corinthians 14:17

For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

Well = properly.

Such a thanksgiving in public is not merely a private matter between the giver of thanks and the Lord. For it happens in public and thereby there is something collective attached to it. The intention is that others hear that prayer, understand it, and thereby be edified. Otherwise you might as well leave it and do it at home, in the inner chamber. Not with many words, for the Lord understands it well if you do it with few words. Everything revolves around the edification and building up of the church. Not only in Corinth, but everywhere where believers are and especially where they come together.

1 Corinthians 14:18

I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

Paul himself evidently could also speak in tongues. He therefore has the right to speak.

1 Corinthians 14:19

Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

With five words teach? Paul says that if we as believers come together, they need not expect him to begin speaking in tongues. That has no sense at all. It is not for the building up of the church and that whole sign was never intended for that either. Rather five words with my understanding = five stands in the Bible for hidden things and thus for spiritual things. Thereby also indirectly for the dominion of grace. Speaking in tongues is by definition speaking about the present work of Christ. That is a hidden work and is characterised by the number 5. It is therefore not for nothing that our dispensation is the 5th dispensation, which moreover is called the dispensation of the grace of God, or the dispensation of the mystery.

1 Corinthians 14:20

Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

You should not be immature in understanding, but use your understanding.

If you want to speak in tongues, there is always someone who advises you to switch off your understanding. But you should use your understanding precisely.

If you do not want to develop something, then that should be malice. Use your understanding therefore. We will now do that.

1 Corinthians 14:21

In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

The law is not the Mosaic law, but the Old Testament. Paul namely quotes from Isaiah.

Language is not only language, but also culture, worldview, and way of life. Nations that speak another language than we do also live differently, look differently at the world, and stand differently in that world.

If you for example read in Romans 3 about the sinfulness of man, then the mouth, the tongue, the throat, and the lips are named. That is therefore the speech organ. The sins that man commits he commits with the mouth, the tongue, the throat, and the lips. Yet it simply concerns the whole doing and letting of man. The speech organ is named first, because the essence of man first comes to expression in his speaking.

James says about that that man by his speaking gives direction to his own life. Man is led by his own tongue (James 3). You therefore should not speak too quickly, for you are stuck with it. For you will act according to your own words, even if they may have been lies. But even then, they were your words and you stick to them. That is called lying until you yourself believe it.

When it speaks of people of other tongues and other lips, it concerns people with a totally different way of life, culture, and so on.

This people = the Jewish people.

This people is namely not the church. It would not be spoken to the church by people of other tongues, but to Israel. They would speak in another tongue than the Israelite tongue and also speak from another culture than the culture of those who live under the Israelite culture and way of life, language, and whatever it may be called.

The word of God would be spoken to the Israelites, but then by people of other tongues and cultures and thus by Gentiles. If it is not Israel, then it is Gentiles. If it is not Gentiles, then it is Israel. There are only two possibilities, Israel and the nations, the Gentiles.

That the word of God would be preached to Israel by Gentiles is a very remarkable phenomenon. It will not achieve much, for yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Speaking of other tongues to Israel therefore has no practical use in practice, for they will not hear anyway.

But if God knows beforehand that they will not hear, why does He do it then? So that they may know afterwards that a prophet of the Lord has been in their midst. So that no one can say afterwards that he did not know. So much stands in the Bible that we do not know. Often it applies that we do not know because we do not want to know. But you cannot even in English say to the Lord that you did not know, for then the Lord says: "But I did tell you!"

"I did not know" is no valid excuse before the Lord. Therefore the Lord has also spoken to Israel in the course of history. They would not listen, but yet the prophets had to speak to Israel, so that they would know that a prophet of the Lord has been in their midst. So they can never say that the Lord never told them anything. The Lord did tell them, in full detail. Not in one tongue, but in many tongues.

For us exactly the same applies. We had a Bible, but we also knew nothing. Why not? Because they never told us anything. Then you say to the Lord: "Our minister never spoke about it."

1 Corinthians 14:21

In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.

Prophecy serves not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

Tongues are therefore a sign to unbelievers. Prophecy is a sign to believers.

The sign of tongues demonstrates that salvation has been sent to the Gentiles. The Gentiles do not hear in their own tongue, but in another tongue. They hear, but do not understand. That is the sign. The sign demonstrates that they do not hear. The sign is therefore negative. It demonstrates unbelief.

Prophecy is for believers. Believers do understand prophecy. They do hear and understand.

The sign of tongues is therefore a sign of unbelief. It demonstrates that the people do not hear. The people are Israel. Israel does not hear. Salvation is sent to the Gentiles. The Gentiles do not understand either. They hear a sound, but do not understand the meaning. That is the sign. The sign demonstrates unbelief.

The sign has therefore served its purpose. The sign has demonstrated that Israel did not hear. The sign has demonstrated that salvation has been sent to the Gentiles. The sign has demonstrated that the Gentiles do not understand either. The sign has therefore done its work. The sign can therefore cease. The sign is no longer needed.

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On the basis of this Old Testament announcement, speaking would take place in other tongues. Tongues are a sign. With a sign it is not about the normal practical and causal use, in the sense of cause and effect, but about the figurative spiritual meaning of the event. It is namely a picture, an illustration, of a certain biblical truth. They are figures of other things.

Speaking in tongues is a sign, not for those who believe (for they have no need of the sign at all), but for the unbelievers. Namely for this people from Isaiah 28, from which verse 21 is quoted.

It is a sign for that people. Not so that they might come to faith, but simply a sign. The question then is what it is a sign of. What is the meaning of this strange phenomenon of speaking in tongues? That is not difficult at all. It is a sign of the situation of our present time, in which at any rate the Jewish people has been dismissed from the priestly office. They are no longer expected by God to preserve the word of God and preach it in the world. Many do not even know that that was the intention for the Jewish people. That is after all the purpose of a royal and priestly people, to proclaim the word of God.

The advantage of the Jews and the profit of circumcision is, in summary, that unto them were committed the oracles of God. Not that the oracles of God were spoken to them, but that they were committed to them. The Lord gave Israel His word and said: "Do business till I come," or something like that.

God gave His word to Israel and Israel's responsibility was to preserve that word, to manage it, and therefore to preach and teach it to the whole of humanity, for that is the function of the firstborn, of the elder brother, of the one who stands at the head of the nations. The Jewish people has been dismissed from that function. Now the roles are reversed and instead of the Jewish people preaching the word of God to the Gentiles from its Hebrew background and culture, those who live under other cultures and tongues, it is the Gentiles who in their tongues bring the gospel to the Jewish people. Of that speaking in tongues is a sign. What is announced in Isaiah 28 is not even the literal speaking in tongues, but the situation of our dispensation, in which salvation has been taken from the Jewish people and instead given to another people, to Gentiles, so that now it is the Gentiles who preach the gospel in the world and first of all to the Jews. Thereby you arrive at Romans 1:16, namely that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. It is preached by Gentiles.

One should also especially understand that someone like the apostle Paul himself in his ministry and position stands as a model for the church. He functions as an example of the teaching. According to Romans 6 Christ is that, but Paul does not fail to say in many of his epistles that we as believers should be followers of him. Be ye followers of me, brethren. As ye have us for an ensample. To Timothy he says that he should be faithful to what he has learned, knowing of whom he has learned it.

Of course, much is philosophised about the special position of Paul in comparison with the twelve, but the only difference between the twelve and Paul is that he was a Gentile and the others were not. Yes, he was also a Jew, but so were those other twelve. That is therefore no difference.

The twelve had seen the Lord Jesus, but Paul also. A little late, but he did see the risen Christ. Paul was born a Roman citizen. He was in any case not from Canaan, Galilee, or Jerusalem, for he was born in Tarsus.

He calls himself the apostle of the Gentiles, which does not mean that he preached the gospel to the Gentiles, for in that too he was not special, for everywhere he went he first sought out the Jews, to preach the gospel to them. Only when they rejected it did he turn to the Gentiles.

Apostle of the Gentiles = Gentile apostle. That is also the most obvious meaning of the expression. That we are prejudiced and therefore immediately interpret it differently is a pity. He distinguished himself because he was a Gentile. His highest ideal as apostle of the Gentiles was that he might provoke to jealousy some of his flesh and win them for Christ. What does apostle of the Gentiles mean in that connection? Simply this, that he as a Gentile brings the gospel to the Jews, in accordance with Romans 1:16, where it stood that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. As apostle of the Gentiles he makes his ministry glorious, to bring them the gospel and to provoke them to jealousy. In Romans 10:19 it stands that the Jews would be provoked to jealousy by a Gentile people. Paul says that he hoped to provoke them to jealousy. That is possible, because he considers himself a Gentile.

That is still the situation in our days. We, the believers from the Gentiles, have the responsibility to preach the gospel to the Jews. The two parties have been reversed. Hopefully they understand what we preach to them. Nevertheless it remains applicable that the gospel is preached by people of other tongues, by stammering lips. By us namely, who in general have no Jewish background at all.

The nice thing is that we preach the gospel from writings that have been handed down to us by the Jews. The Bible is not Jewish, but in the last instance has come to us through the Jews. That the Bible would be Jewish is the modernist misunderstanding that the Bible would only have been written in and after the exile. That is therefore not so. The Bible is the word of God and has come to us through Israel. The books of Moses are obviously of much earlier date. The Bible has come to us through Israel, the chosen people. The Jewish people is indeed the longest remnant of the people of Israel. Strictly speaking, when Judaism once stood on its feet and once functioned as the basis of Jewish culture, the whole Old Testament was already complete. Jewish culture and religion stem from the Babylonian exile. After the exile only the books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were added to the Old Testament. That is only a very small part of the Old Testament writings. The Bible is therefore not Jewish, but has been preserved through Judaism and then came to us.

That does not alter that, when we preach the gospel to them, we do so on the basis of that Book that we have received through Judaism. That reversed situation is characteristic of our days, in which therefore indeed the church, the assembly, has come in the place of Israel. That place is the position of chosen people to whom the oracles of God were committed. That people is responsible to preserve the word of God, to maintain it, or simply to preach it. The figure of that we find in speaking in tongues. A sign that in itself has no practical use at all, but it proves that the prophecy from Isaiah 28 has been fulfilled in our days of the Corinthians and is still being fulfilled in our days, whereby as it were still speaking in tongues takes place, for we try in all kinds of tongues to preach the gospel to the Jews. That we do not do that in Hebrew has a good reason, because most Jews do not understand Hebrew.

Above Isaiah 28 stands: Judgment over Ephraim and Judah, whereby it should be noted that Ephraim and Judah are two different peoples. Ephraim is also called Israel. Judah is the kingdom of the two tribes, which we know as the Jews. That is therefore not Israel here in Isaiah.

Here it is announced that the Lord will bring judgment especially over the Jews. That is not literally stated as such, but that appears from its application in the New Testament.

Isaiah 28:5

In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people,

That is a part of that people. On the other hand we come to another part of that same people. In practice that is Judah.

Isaiah 28:6

And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

That is somewhat cryptic language, but what is announced is at any rate a judgment. Over whom that is stands in that somewhat cryptic language.

Isaiah 28:7 But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they

are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

It concerns a people that is as it were drunk and therefore no longer knows where it is and what responsibility it bears. That is actually the responsibility of priest and prophet, for Israel is that people to whom the oracles of God were committed, which they should manage.

But it stands that they have erred. First it stands that this comes through strong drink, but afterwards that it was not they who drank the strong drink, but that the strong drink has drunk them up. They are swallowed up of wine. They are in the grip of those errors. They stumble in judgment = judgment has to do with direction. They cannot find the right direction.

Isaiah 28:8

For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean. Tables are the figure of fellowship. Of course, the table is the table at which one eats, from which one eats, and around which one gathers. Therefore it is an expression of fellowship. That is also so in the New Testament and especially also in the so-called Lord's Supper. Fellowship is formed by a corresponding way of life, a culture. A table therefore stands for a culture.

Where it here concerns the Jewish people, this means that their tables are the figure of Judaism. In that sense it is also used into the New Testament.

Their tables are full. Jewish life is expected to be rich. Jewish culture also knows precepts for all actions in life. All actions are laid down. That table is therefore full of laws and rules, which here are called vomit and filthiness. You can well imagine it; they have behaved terribly at that table, so that it is one great mess on that table. There is no more place on the table. The table is full of rubbish.

That would be no problem, were it not that something else should be set on that table

Isaiah 28:9

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts?

The Lord wants to set something on the table for them, but that cannot be, for the table is full. If that were still with valuable things, it would still be understandable, but that was clearly not the case.

Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts = it is all milk and no solid food. They are all children sitting at the table. You know what happens when children sit at the table, they make a mess of it.

If you then ask what is meant by the vomit and that filthiness that stand on the table and determine their way of life, then it stands...

Isaiah 28:10

For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:

The table is full of precepts.

Here a little, and there a little = this must be so and that must be just a little different. It is all prescribed. That is characteristic of every religion. Judaism functions as a caricature of what religion is. The whole life is determined by precepts and prescribes how you must get out of bed. Which leg first. This is not mocking, for this is Judaism. In the New Testament we learn that the Jews had no interest in the Lord, in the gospel, in the New Covenant. They cling to the Old Covenant. They already have a faith and do not

need anything else. There was no room for anything else. You can also see that well in the Gospels.

The Lord, however, says that what they have is vomit and filthiness.

Paul uses exactly the same terms in Philippians 3 when he speaks of his past. If there is anything to boast of according to the flesh, then he also, but what he could boast in he counted loss and dung for Christ's sake. Loss in the sense of forfeiture. He counted all that loss and dung, that he might win Christ. All that he counted loss and dung was of a religious nature. That therefore explains what that dung actually is.

Humanly speaking they are nice things, but in practice they are of no use. They get you nowhere. For all religion it applies that it is a ministry of death (2 Corinthians 3). Then we have not even spoken of the weakness and unprofitableness of the law (Hebrews 7:18). It is loss and dung.

That is so with all religion and Judaism is used by God as an illustration of it. If you say that Judaism is a beautiful religion, the question is what profit it has brought the Jews in the course of history. Nothing, on the contrary. That is what religion does to man. It brings him nothing good and that is illustrated.

From this verse alone it is clear to see that it is not about Ephraim, but about Judah.

Then you also know that verse 5 is not about Judah, but about Ephraim. That contrast is made here. We usually read over that, but it does stand there.

Because that table is full of vomit and filthiness and because Jewish culture consists of precepts and rules and there is no place for anything else, therefore...

Isaiah 28:11

For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.

With another tongue, with another language. Note that it stands here in the singular.

With what language then? With Greek. Therefore the New Testament comes to us in Greek. When we preach the gospel to the Jews from the New Testament, that happens from the Greek. That is also the intention, from God's side. That alone is characteristic of our dispensation and proves that that priestly people is not the Jewish people, but a Gentile people. The New Testament is written in the language of the Gentiles of those days. The thought in it undoubtedly comes simply from the Old Testament. The New Covenant is the fulfilment of what was announced in the Old Testament. You can also recognise that from the language use of the New Testament, but you must absolutely not conclude that the New Testament was apparently originally written in Hebrew, for that is not so. Explicitly not, for it comes demonstratively from God to us in Greek. With another tongue, with another language.

The sign of that is speaking in tongues in Acts 2. Nothing more than that. And even then a sign addressed to Israel.

There is also a simple explanation for that. Suppose now that a Jew who hears the gospel would cry: "But I have a Bible and in Isaiah it stands that before the Jewish people comes to repentance and before the Messiah therefore comes and before the Messiah as Son of David restores His throne in Jerusalem, yet speaking would be done to the Jewish people by people of stammering lips?" Then the answer would have been that this happened on the day of Pentecost. Since that day of Pentecost in Acts 2 that argument falls away. It had already happened then. But it should not close our eyes to the fact that in reality at a much higher level to this day the gospel is preached to the Jews by Gentiles; literally therefore by people of stammering lips and other tongues.

Isaiah 28:12

To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

To whom (this people) He said: This is the rest, give rest to the weary, and this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear.

The rest is already in the law the designation of the New Testament blessings. The short route of the explanation of that runs through Hebrews 3 and 4, where it is said that God would bring His people into the rest and where the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says that Joshua did not do that and David did not either. That would only happen under the Messiah, of whom Joshua was a type. That is also how the Lord Jesus is called if we were to write His name in Hebrew. We do not do that, for we stick to the Greek. David did not bring them into the rest either, for David himself still spoke in his Psalms of a rest that would come. It would be realised by the Son of David, who would come forth from his body. After that it stands that we who believe enter into that rest which is promised. Rest is a synonym for peace and thereby the peace of the New Covenant. It was promised to that people, namely rest and refreshing. Refreshing = revival. It is a somewhat weaker term for resurrection from the dead.

Yet they would not hear. Because they would not hear...

Isaiah 28:13

But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

Thus the word of the Lord to them shall be no more than precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, and so on. In the New Testament it is at least suggested that the weight of the yoke of Judaism would become many times heavier in New Testament times, in which the Jewish people would be unbelieving. The last state of that man is worse than the first (Matthew 12:45).

In the Old Testament histories it is also often pictured that it would go that way with the Jewish people.

The yoke would become even heavier for the Jews, with the result that they go away = they have again ended up in exile. They shall fall backward, which was also pictured by the Lord Jesus in a sign. In the garden of Gethsemane a squad from the high priest came to take the Lord Jesus prisoner. When the Lord Jesus made Himself known, they all fell backward (John 18:6). That is a figure of what would happen to the Jewish people and a reference to among other things this statement here in Isaiah 28. They would moreover be broken, snared, and taken. They would end up in exile and get stuck in a snare. They would become prisoners of their own culture and their own religion. That would be a snare and a net for them, in which they would be snared and thus taken. Snares and nets are trapping tools.

Isaiah 28:14

Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.

Here it therefore stands that it concerns the Jewish people. Jerusalem was indeed the capital of Israel, but the king came from Judah. It was also King David from Judah who conquered Jebus and made it Jerusalem, his seat. Jerusalem is a Jewish city, although it lies on the border with Benjamin. The Jews say that the temple lay in Benjamin, but by biblical standards all Jerusalem lies in Benjamin. Because the city was conquered by David, it became a Jewish city, but the location lies in the territory of Benjamin.

The rulers over this people which is in Jerusalem = the rulers from the royal house of David. One or two of those kings did occasionally do something that was right in the sight of the Lord, but in general they did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. Samaria was the capital of the ten tribes, of Israel. The successive kings from this Israel, who came from at least 7 different dynasties, all did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. It is no pleasant history of those two houses of Israel.

Isaiah 28:15

Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

Historically they had made a covenant with Egypt, but you understand that these words in practice do not concern a covenant with Egypt, but their own Jewish religion. Religion itself means binding, a covenant. Prophetically it means that they have a covenant, namely the law. They live from that. That is not the Mosaic law, but the Jewish. They have arranged everything and think that nothing can happen to them.

Isaiah 28:16

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

A foundation stone we call the first stone. The precious corner stone is however not the first stone, but the last stone of a building. The First Stone is Christ and He is also the last Stone. He is the First and the Last.

Unfortunately we have explained away the concept of corner stone by saying that this is the corner of the foundation. The corner stone is however the top of the building, the last stone. That is why it is called in Psalm 118 the head stone of the corner.

He that believeth shall not make haste = he that believeth shall not run away; he that believeth shall not withdraw. It is prophesied of the Jewish people that it shall withdraw. When the gospel came and the Lord went to build a temple, with a Foundation Stone, of which the foundation is laid by the apostles and prophets, of which Christ is the chief corner stone (Ephesians 2:20) and thus the New Covenant dawned, then this Jewish people withdrew. If we believe we do not withdraw. Then we give ourselves over to Him, so that we as living stones get a place in that whole building. There are many Scripture passages that speak about this.

In this chapter it is announced on the one hand that the Lord would bring blessings and on the other that He would bring judgments. See for the blessings at any rate verse 5 and verse 16. In between it speaks of the judgments, which continue in verse 17.

Blessings would come over a part of Jacob and judgment over another part of Jacob. That judgment comes over Jerusalem and Judah and blessings over Ephraim. It may be clear that the blessings that come over Ephraim in practice have the building of this temple as a result. Not from Judah, but from Ephraim, not from the two tribes, but from the ten tribes.

If you read these things in 1 Corinthians 14, then it should be clear that this prophecy must have an application in one way or another in our days. What you then see is that the responsible position of people of God is taken from Judah, because this people withdraws. That responsibility has come to that temple that is being built, namely to the

church. We are now that royal and priestly people. Within the framework of this prophecy the responsibility lies not with Judah, but with Ephraim.

Speaking in tongues therefore serves no practical use, but is an illustration of the truth that in our present time salvation has come to another people, to the Gentiles. From those Gentiles the gospel would be preached to the Jews. And whether they will thereby also come to faith? No, for it stands that yet for all that they will not hear Him.

As long as the church dispensation lasts and the blessings lie with Ephraim, Judah will not come to faith. In practice this means that if Judah comes to faith, this can only happen after the rapture of the church. The roles remain reversed until the 70th week of Daniel dawns, after which Judah will yet come to faith, simply because the Lord Himself will overturn their table and bring a judgment over Judaism and thereby over the Jewish people. Thereby it is immediately explained why the Lord after the so-called entry into Jerusalem went to the temple and there began by overturning the tables. That means that He will one day in the future put an end to that Jewish religion, because it stands in the way of the Jews coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That applies of course not only to the Jews, but to all who are adherents of any religion, for religion stands in the way of man believing. Religion is being bound and giving execution to laws and rules, precepts and ordinances. Then you do not need to believe and then you attach no importance at all to the truth. Only when one lets go of religion will one be open to the truth and the life and the blessings that the Lord would give.

As soon as it concerns the idea that God develops a plan during salvation history, a plan in different phases, then that is always controversial with us. In one way or another we have a static image of God. We are active and do something, while God is there in heaven. We do not know exactly what He does there. We do try to set Him to work, but that is on a small scale, for us individually. But that He works out a plan for the world, a plan that has different aspects and is executed in different phases, then we suddenly do not respond. That we have such plans is fine, but that God has such plans apparently never penetrates. The most important thing is that we know that the whole salvation history yet falls into at least two parts, namely that of the Old Testament time, called the times of ignorance (Acts 17), or the former time (Hebrews), in which sacrifices were brought that could not cleanse those who brought the sacrifices as to their conscience. After that Old Testament time we first have a white page and then follows the New Testament, which is not entirely correct, for it is the New Testament Bible books. Then we have come to what the Bible calls the last days, the end time. That does not begin only just before the second coming of Christ, but began since the resurrection of Christ. That is the second half of salvation history, the New Testament time.

In a certain sense the Old Testament time only begins with Moses, for there is first talk of the Old Covenant, which would one day be replaced by the New. With Moses you are already far past half of the Old Testament history. The Old Testament history comprises a period of about 4000 years and in the middle of that you have the calling of Abraham. You understand that you then automatically get a division. Not only in time, but also in work. The calling of Israel as people of God officially only took place at the exodus from Egypt, under Moses. That is approximately in 1650 BC. Somewhat more fundamentally the calling of Israel begins with the calling of Abraham. That namely implies the coming into being of a great people, or many peoples, or a multitude of peoples. Historically speaking a people is only spoken of at the exodus from Egypt. In the first half of the Old Testament time one is therefore in very different circumstances. There was no chosen

people at all. Abraham was not yet there, let alone Jacob and his twelve sons, from whom that people would come. In short, God's work builds up in different phases. In New Testament time you get exactly the same. The rough division is that of the coming of Christ to His second coming. Somewhat more detailed, from the resurrection of Christ to the rapture of the church, after which there follows a relatively short period in which the Lord will yet establish His kingdom on earth. When that is established there follows a period of 1000 years and more, in which this kingdom will yet be established on this old earth.

If you have no idea of those divisions, then you also get nowhere with those expressions about: "In the law it is written..."

In connection with Isaiah 28 these are statements about this present time, in which Israel would prove to be unbelieving. At the moment that the Lord wants to place things on the table for them, it proves impossible, because the table is full of vomit and filthiness. For that reason He will speak to this people in other tongues. In 1 Corinthians 14 it stands: by men of other tongues. By other people therefore, by non-Jews, but yet for all that they will not hear me. That is the description of this present time, from the resurrection of Christ, in which salvation is entrusted to another people. In practice that is the church, for the church is the chosen people in Christ, the pillar and ground of the truth, the temple in which the word of God would be preserved. From the church the word of God would be preached to Israel.

In our days the Jewish people is not that chosen people, for as a people it is unbelieving. It was Ammi, but has become Lo-ammi. In the Psalms it already stood: "And let another take his office" (Psalm 109:8).

Let his habitation be desolate, and let another take his office. But does that not concern Judas (Acts 1:20)? That is indeed so, but if you read it in the Psalms, then you do not get the idea that it concerns a certain Judas, but that it does concern a certain Judah. That concerns the Jewish people, which would lose its office. Office = elder, teacher, shepherd, and priest.

If it concerns a people that loses its office, then that office is also given to another people. That office has come to the church. The church or the assembly does indeed stand in the place of the Jewish people and has received this office, namely the preserving of the word of God that is committed to us. That applies to the church collectively, but just as well to all church members individually. So it applied to Israel in the past and so it applies to us in our present time.

The replacement of Judas by a certain Matthias is a figure of the replacement of the Jewish people by what in practice is the church. There you just have such a sign. We find this only no wonder, but an ordinary historical event. There were twelve disciples, one of whom had come to a fatal end. He had to be replaced and so someone was put in Judas's place and so it happened. Could they not manage with eleven men? Of course they could. Moreover, there were also more than twelve. Those twelve were a special category. Paul did not even belong to them. It was not fixed on a number for practical reasons. This replacement of Judas by Matthias is the fulfilment of statements from the Psalms, but the real fulfilment of what stands in those Psalms happens in our days. The Jewish people is replaced by another people, in that same position of office. That was therefore also a sign. Not a wonder, but a sign. So speaking in tongues is also a sign of the replacement of Judah by the church.

Certain events are mentioned as fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, while afterwards a much more important fulfilment yet comes. This kind of fulfilment of the prophecy we conveniently call a forced fulfilment. The prophecy is as it were fulfilled on purpose, although you must understand that things are not done to fulfil prophecies. God has simply said that He will do this. He does not do that to fulfil His word, although He does that, but He does that for other reasons. Nevertheless we read in the Gospels and sometimes in Acts and even here in 1 Corinthians 14 that certain things happened for the sake of the fulfilment of prophecies. The peculiarity in all these circumstances is that the fulfilment of all those prophecies is a forced fulfilment. It has also become a handle to discredit the Bible. Paul, for example, has given speaking in tongues a biblical basis in that way, to underpin it scripturally. He has searched quite hard for it and yes, there he found a text in Isaiah 28, which he then applies to speaking in tongues. The writer of the Gospel according to Matthew has the Lord Jesus dwell and grow up in Galilee, for this neatly corresponds with a statement from Isaiah chapter 9 (or sometimes referred to in connection with chapter 8), which speaks of the Galilee of the Gentiles, where light would arise. It all fits together rather nicely. In this way, they sought to present Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah.

Going one step further, of course, they then had Him born in Bethlehem as well, because that is stated in Micah. That is why we have the account of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey—an entry which, incidentally, ended badly, for it concluded with Jesus weeping. But that narrative was inserted because it refers to a statement from Zechariah 9: “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee... riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”

If you read Zechariah 9 without knowing the story of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, you would hardly think that it says the Messiah would come on a donkey. Moreover, even if it did apply, one might suppose it referred not to His first coming but to His second coming. After all, Zechariah 9 speaks of various judgements accompanying the King's arrival—judgements upon the Philistines and upon Javan (the Greek empire). That prophecy was in fact already fulfilled in the days when Alexander the Great's Greek empire fell, along with the Philistines. Alternatively, it points to the second coming of Christ, when He will bring judgement upon the nations.

Nevertheless, one of the Evangelists records that this took place “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee...” referring to Zechariah 9. We are reasonably sensible people, and we ask ourselves what possible sense there is in God—the Creator of heaven and earth—announcing beforehand through the prophet that one day the Messiah would come on a donkey. It seems rather trivial. What is the point of it? The answer, of course, is that there is something deeper behind it, and that the event itself carries a far greater and more far-reaching significance. Does it really matter to us where the Lord Jesus came to live when He returned from Egypt with His parents? Why, then, is it important to mention it, and why is it added that this was in accordance with a prophecy from Isaiah—when, if you read Isaiah, you would not immediately conclude that it says the Messiah would dwell and grow up in Galilee?

All these things mentioned above (and others like them) are signs. The fact that the Lord did not live in Judaea but in Galilee pictures that in His first coming He came, but since then He does not dwell in Judaea among the Jews, but in Galilee—which is called the Galilee of the Gentiles—among the Gentiles. Not among the Jewish people as such, but

in practice among the Church. That is what it portrays, and that is the thrust of the statements in Isaiah 8 and 9. The Lord's coming on a donkey—which was disguised as the twelve disciples, who laid their garments on the donkey and then the Lord Jesus rode upon it—made that donkey look suspiciously like Peter, John, James, and the rest. That was intentional, for the idea is that the donkey is a picture of the body of Christ, which He uses and upon which He rides. For when the Lord comes definitively as King to bring judgement upon the Philistines and upon the Greek empire—upon the antichristian empire—He does indeed come by way of the Mount of Olives and with His Church.

Throughout the whole Bible, the donkey is a picture of the believing remnant. You can safely entrust the Word of God to a donkey, for donkeys sometimes speak very wisely things. Think, for example, of Balaam's donkey, which was far wiser than its master. These are relatively simple biblical pictures. Even the ministry of John the Baptist had in itself no practical utility. Why did someone need to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus? When they asked John the Baptist who he was, he replied, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness," quoting from Isaiah 40: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

In fact, that prophecy is about the Lord Jesus in His first coming, whereby He prepares the way for His coming as the Messiah. It speaks of the coming of Jesus as the Way-preparer for the Christ. It speaks of the coming of the Lord Jesus in His humiliation, culminating in His death, so that thereby the way might be prepared to eternal life and thus to the revelation of the kingdom of God—which will take place at His second coming. In short, John the Baptist is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet the primary meaning of Isaiah 40 is not that someone like John the Baptist would come, but the first coming of Christ in humiliation.

Behind John the Baptist there also stands the figure of Elijah, about whom the Lord Jesus said that if they had believed, John the Baptist would have been that Elijah who was to come.

All these are repetitions of signs. This is not to say that no one came to faith through the ministry of John the Baptist, but the function of way-preparer is somewhat exaggerated. Could the Lord not have come if John the Baptist had not come first? Yes, it is in the Bible—but why? Once you understand that Isaiah 40 speaks primarily not of John the Baptist but of the Lord Himself in His first coming, the problem is solved. The Lord Jesus came in humiliation, as one crying in the wilderness. Only a minority wished to listen to Him, but the people as a whole certainly did not.

Everything we know as a sign has precisely the same function, for not only speaking in tongues but also, for example, the gift of healings had the same purpose. They are all signs of God's work in our days. The work of God in these days does not consist in healing the sick, but the healing of the outward man is a picture of the healing of the inward man. When the Old Testament says that He would open the eyes of the blind, you would have to be very blind indeed to think it is about literally blind people having their eyes opened. It is about people who are spiritually blind, who see yet do not perceive. The Lord announces that He would open their eyes in a spiritual sense. That He also did it literally on earth is true, but that is precisely why they are called signs. They are signs of greater things.

Likewise, speaking in tongues is a beautiful illustration of God's work in the present time, in which He makes use of another people to preach the gospel to the Jews. That they should become jealous is logical, for it ought to have been their task—namely, to preach the Word of God to the nations.

We have not even touched on the fact that this sign was a miracle: they spoke languages they had never learned. Apparently they themselves did not even understand what they were saying. If you do not understand the position we are in today—that the salvation of the Jewish people has been taken away and given to another people who stand in the place of the Jewish people—how could you understand what speaking in tongues really means? If you do not know the reality, how could you understand the sign?

If you ask whether the church has taken the place of Israel, the answer is a resounding yes. Then the question arises as to what that means and what responsibility that entails for this royal and priestly people. It should not escape you that Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, and later Peter in his first epistle, says that believers today are the chosen people, using the very words that in Exodus 19 were applied to Israel.

1 Peter 2:9

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

The first part is drawn from Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2, and 26:18. These are the words that applied to Israel. He does not say Ye are... but But ye are..., implying that they (the Jews) are unbelieving, but ye who believe are that chosen people. There is no need to debate this, for this is what the Bible teaches: that the Church takes the place of the chosen people, and that Judah has been set aside. Do you call that replacement theology? It may be, but it must be added here that in the days of Christ's second coming and the conversion of the Jewish people, the situation will once again change, for then Israel will again be the chosen people and bear the responsibility to preach the Word of God to all nations. If you then ask what happens to the Church—since that is surely the Church's task—the answer is that by that time we shall have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air. We shall then have been fully promoted to a heavenly position. On earth, the work of preserving the Word of God will be carried on by Israel, by all twelve tribes. See Revelation 7 concerning the 144,000 sealed.

If replacement theology means that Israel has no future according to biblical standards and that the Church has permanently taken its place, then of course that is not correct. But that in our days the Church occupies the position of Israel, with all the rights and responsibilities, that is certainly true. Beyond that, it is eschatology and concerns Israel's position in the days of Christ's second coming.

These things can only be understood if you accept and believe that God unfolds a plan over the course of time. At certain moments, things are exchanged—certainly in our days. What about Gideon's sign of the fleece? He had to lay the fleece outside. The grass around it became soaking wet, but the fleece was dry. Then Gideon wanted another sign. The next day it was exactly the opposite: the fleece was soaking wet, and the grass was dry. Once you have explained the point of a dry fleece in wet grass, you then have to explain the reverse. That presents quite a problem. What was the meaning of it, or did it have no meaning at all? It precisely pictures that reversal in the present time, in connection with the believing remnant—of which Gideon and his 300 men are a

beautiful picture. The sign expresses that the position of the believing remnant will change, with the grass representing mankind and the nations in general, and the fleece representing Israel in particular. The dew pictures life, the Word of God, and all that is connected with it.

In all those Old Testament narratives you find this sort of truth pictured, especially with regard to the present time. In some narratives it is very obvious, but there are other signs that are much harder to understand—yet you find them from the very first page of the Bible. In Genesis 2 you already learn what dew is: that it is a picture of life and of the Word of God. You need that later again in the Psalms and indeed in this sign of Gideon. In this way you come to understand these things. Those signs illustrate and confirm the situation in which we live.

It is all very well to say that God hides His face, but that is rather vague. It turns out that this entire situation is not only announced page by page in the Old Testament but is also illustrated—without it being explicitly stated. You have to learn to understand it through biblical pictures yourself, for the Bible explains itself. Then it suddenly becomes a powerful story. God hides Himself. Yes, for He announced it beforehand. You find this extensively with Moses, in the Psalms, and moreover in the prophets it is stated that a day will come when He will no longer hide Himself—implying that hiding in our days. You encounter this exchange with great emphasis in Isaiah. To whom is the arm of the LORD actually revealed? Upon whom does it fall? That suggests at the very least that it would come upon those where you would not expect it. The Word was sent to Jacob, and it fell in Israel. If you are somewhat historically informed, you know that it did fall—but not among the Jews, for Jacob's twelve tribes are Israel, but the name Israel went with the ten tribes and not with the two. In one stroke that portion of Scripture is explained. The Word was indeed sent to Jacob, to all twelve tribes of Israel, but it fell in Israel—among the ten tribes. It went from Judah somewhere else.

Or, as it says a few chapters later in Isaiah: I am found of them that sought me not. By others, then. By people who moreover speak another language. They have received the Word and have been made the people of God. They now bear the responsibility to minister that Word.

This whole narrative is the occasion for 1 Corinthians 14:21–22, but it is also the introduction to what follows in the chapter, for that deals with how things should be conducted among believers. Paul then points out that we as believers bear responsibility for that Word. That we should minister that Word as priests—and thus with all reverence—and handle it respectfully. God is a God of order, so all things should be done decently and in order. Insofar as we as believers are still in training for a future priestly function—and we are—we are expected to be edified; therefore Paul says that everything that happens in the Church should be for the edifying of the believers. If it is not, then it does not really belong in the Church. The discussion then quickly turns to whether speaking in tongues edifies the Church and thus belongs in the Church or not. You can make it as complicated as you like.

Speaking in tongues, then, is a sign of the situation in the present time—and indeed a sign intended for unbelievers. No Jew will be able to say that before the Messiah comes, people with ridiculous lips must first speak to them. That has already happened in the past and is still happening now.

That sign, therefore, is not for the Church but for unbelievers—in contrast to prophecy, which is precisely for believers. Prophecy is also not a sign. Prophecy is directly for

believers and has practical utility. The gift of prophecy has a function within the Church, for the edifying and instruction of the Church. As for unbelievers, the gospel is preached to them. That is nothing new; it has always been the same. People should believe in the Word of God and, more particularly now, in the Lord Jesus Christ, who came as the fulfilment of and in accordance with the Word of God.

What follows is not really about how a church gathering should be structured. There are no prescriptions. First and foremost, it is about how it should not be. It must not become chaos. How exactly it should be is not stated. How it should not be is just about stated.

1 Corinthians 14:23

If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

Mad is what the old English translations say for out of your mind or mad.

If only unknown tongues are spoken that no one understands, what are you doing?

Moreover, it is a misuse of the gift.

Will they not say that ye are mad? Yes, they will say that, for that is what it is.

1 Corinthians 14:24

But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all.

Judged here means reproved or convicted. Prophecy is expected to come to us in ordinary language that everyone understands, and it is expected to be the Word of God. That is useful, because it is understood and comprehended. All prophesying might still be possible, but all speaking in tongues—that is madness.

1 Corinthians 14:25

And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

These are rather lofty words, but the idea is simple enough: namely, that the Word of God is being spoken. That Word is expected to resonate with the conscience of man—even with the conscience of the natural man. In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul says that where he preaches the Word, he makes himself manifest to every man's conscience (2 Corinthians 4:2): But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

By biblical standards, the conscience contains elementary and fundamental knowledge of truth in general. That is the good soil into which the Word then falls and bears fruit.

When truth passes by, you recognise it instantly, whether you fully understand it or not.

You sense it intuitively. Unless, of course, you have by now seared your conscience as with a hot iron. You can, if you choose, ruin your conscience by rejecting things that come to you—things you know or recognise—but which you do not want. Then the conscience loses its function. The conscience is a lamp of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly

Proverbs 20:27

The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

Moreover, this is an idea that corresponds with ancient classical philosophy, which holds that people possess certain ideas and concepts—more or less intuitively. In life, man seeks the realisation and fulfilment of those things he knows by nature, things he has within himself (Plato's theory of Forms). That is why man is always searching. The problem, however, is that man is not always inclined to accept what he finds. Man knows concepts such as love, justice, truth, and so on. He knows what they are, but he cannot find them—for where do you find love, where do you find justice, and where do you find truth?

Philosophers have since reduced love to a matter of hormones, declared that justice does not exist because nothing is truly just, and as for truth—well, everyone has his own truth. These people have done their utmost to corrupt our consciences to such an extent that we no longer recognise truth. We do not even believe it exists any more, any more than justice or love. These are just a few such concepts, but you can fill in the rest yourself. All those abstract notions that we cannot precisely define, yet we know they exist. People search for them and try to find them somewhere. Where else would you find them but with the Lord and in His Word? He has been made unto us righteousness from God. He is the truth. God is love. If you seek those concepts, you find God Himself. The search for the realisation of those concepts and ideas arises from deep within man. In the Bible, that is simply called the conscience. If someone is sincere and seeks sincerely, he will recognise it in the circumstances described here. The hidden things of his heart—what was already there—are made manifest. Believers can simply say that they have found what they were looking for. Perhaps there are people who were not even looking, yet still found. The key is sincerity. If you are not sincere, it becomes very difficult.

Wisdom is another such concept. Wisdom says of itself that those who seek her early shall find her. In general, it holds that he who seeks shall find. If you do not seek, you usually do not find. If you are sincere, you have a great chance—even if you are not seeking—to find anyway.

In any case, what is described here is this: when the Word of God is spoken in clear language, it can work in this way. Then the Word of God is conveyed, and those things that a man knows but cannot find come to light. They are made manifest, with the result: falling down on his face—he submits himself. That is the meaning throughout the whole Bible. Falling down on his face, he will worship God. The best way to worship God is to submit yourself to God. You do that simply by accepting what He has spoken. That is called faith.

And report that God is in you of a truth. Not on the basis of the miraculous sign of speaking in tongues, but through speaking in clear language the living and abiding Word of God. That on the other hand it also provokes enmity is well known. Paul here starts from the positive: people would be edified and perhaps even come to faith.

1 Corinthians 14:26

What is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

Paul does not say that when you come together, you must begin with a vatum and greeting, or something of that sort. You will not find how it should be done. Some assemblies of believers claim that they alone gather in the New Testament way. They naturally mean to say that the way they do it is the only correct way. To think that it must be done exactly as it is done there, and then to claim that the Spirit leads it so, is rather presumptuous. How it should be done? It is hard to say. After all, no fixed rules are given for it in the Bible. What we do find in the Bible is that the preaching of the Word of God is edifying and that this is primary. We also find that there is joint singing, as an expression of fellowship with one another. It is also biblical for someone to utter a prayer and for the others perhaps to say amen to it. In what order all these things should happen is not stated in the Bible, any more than how long the meeting should last or when it should be held. Apparently the believers gathered on the first day of the week, but you find no prescriptions about it anywhere. The reason is probably that such matters are highly culture-bound. What is possible in one time and circumstance may not be in another. There is therefore freedom in these things, which should simply not be abused. The problem is that where we stand in freedom, that freedom will be abused. In Galatians 2:4 it speaks of false brethren who crept in unawares to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage. Nowhere does it say that you should therefore restrict that liberty. The liberty is there. For the rest, we agree things among ourselves. That is the best way to prevent disorder. If an organist wants to know in advance which hymns will be sung because otherwise he cannot play them well, then so be it. If there is no one in your midst who can teach the church anything, then you agree to bring someone in from elsewhere who can. Beyond that, there is little to say. Simply because the Bible says no more about it.

What is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

Every one of you means whoever it may be. It does not mean that everyone must have something to contribute, but that if someone has something to contribute, it may be for the edifying of the church.

Hath a psalm could mean that someone suggests a hymn, but also that someone has composed a hymn and brings it to sing together. It has always been a Christian practice to write hymns. The Word makes us alive and indeed promotes creativity.

In any case, it can be all sorts of things—and that is what the apostle says. The point is that all things be done unto edifying. It does not specify where the boundaries lie. Is playing shuffleboard edifying? Well, it is a sort of parlour game to promote mutual fellowship, but to devote a gathering of the church of God to shuffleboard? The Bible does not state where those boundaries lie. We ourselves must understand that and make the judgement ourselves. If someone says you must do it this way or that, but you cannot do it that way, then do it differently. It must be seemly and for the edifying of the church. One has this ministry and another that. Some things do not work for you, but do for others. Some preaching may leave you feeling completely unaddressed, while others are greatly edified by it. That can all happen. People are different, and we must accept that. As long as the essence is that the Word of God comes first. That is where we meet one another primarily. That is what we have in common. If, besides that, other activities can be organised to promote practical fellowship among believers, then that is only good.

In former times it was customary to establish a choir. You sing hymns to the honour of the Lord and do it together. Making music together is also, by biblical standards, very conducive to fellowship.

Whatever it is, let all things be done unto edifying, unto building up.

1 Corinthians 14:27

If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

Two or three is always few in the Bible. A believing remnant is also called two or three. Where two or three are gathered together in my name... It is not about two or three, but about few. Likewise you find two or three berries in the topmost bough of the tree—a picture of the believing remnant.

If you do speak in tongues in a gathering, do it by turns and not all at once.

Let one interpret—the emphasis on one indicates it is a numeral. There must be at least one who can interpret the speaking in tongues, for otherwise it would not take place in the church at all. If it happens, then it must be interpreted. That is what it says.

1 Corinthians 14:28

But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

If there is no interpreter, then let him speak in tongues at home. Then he hears himself speaking, and God hears him too. That is sufficient. The sign of speaking in tongues has in fact already lost its function here. Those who once received that gift still had the gift and were therefore expected to use it. For the rest, it is a matter of time, for that gift would naturally die out. Paul does not oppose speaking in tongues, but he says that whatever happens in the church should edify and be done decently.

1 Corinthians 14:29

Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

There is debate about whether the others are also prophets. It does not say so. Perhaps the others are the other believers. In any case, where we hear the Word of God, we have the responsibility to examine whether these things we hear are so. It is natural to read this verse as: if there are two or three prophets, then other prophets must be present to judge whether these prophets are true prophets, by assessing whether what they say truly comes from the Lord. This seems unlikely, however.

Whatever is spoken must in any case be in accordance with the Old Testament—the Scriptures available in those days. Whatever God does in these days is the fulfilment of what He announced in the Old Testament. Thus what applied to the Bereans also applies to us: that they searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so (Acts 17:11)

Paul considers two or three speakers sufficient in one gathering. The others—those who do not speak—judge whether the things spoken are so. That is why we all bring a Bible to a gathering, so that we can at least check whether what is said is even in the Bible. Then it should go further: not only checking whether it is in the Bible, but also whether what is said about it is biblical. We all bear that responsibility. One is better equipped for it than another, but you have to start somewhere. The responsibility lies with ourselves, and we have that responsibility towards the Lord.

1 Corinthians 14:30

If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. There should not be speaking all at once. Moreover, we are expected to esteem others better than ourselves. Even if we thought we had something to say, but someone else has something to say, let that one go first. Of course, you can also agree on it—especially since we no longer have prophets. We are not prophets and therefore cannot fully imagine how it works.

1 Corinthians 14:31

For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. You can picture the situation in Corinth. A few speak in tongues, and moreover a few prophesy all at once. Chaotic, then. That is not the intention. The prophets can perfectly well prophesy one by one. If it happens all at once, no one understands, no one learns, and no one is comforted.

1 Corinthians 14:32

And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. The spirits of the prophets—and thus the spiritual gifts of the prophets. The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. It is not the case that if a prophet receives an impulse, he must necessarily speak. The prophet can control himself and wait for his opportunity. He can decide for himself when he speaks or is silent. The responsibility for that lies with the prophets themselves.

1 Corinthians 14:33

For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. In the word confusion you recognise the English word war. Confusion and war are synonyms. The opposite of confusion is therefore peace. Confusion is strife. God is not a God of confusion or strife, but of peace. Confusion naturally has to do with the one who causes confusion—namely, the disorderer, the diabolos, the devil. He is the one who causes confusion, while God is the God of peace and rest. That is what He is everywhere. As in all churches of the saints. From which you can conclude that the practice of the gatherings in the church at Corinth rather deviated from the gatherings in other local churches. In those other churches things evidently went more orderly than in Corinth. Paul tries to bring some order to them. Probably these Corinthians already had little discipline in their ordinary lives. That then expresses itself in the believers' gatherings. Paul reproves them about it. Certain matters may be culture-bound, but the standard for believers' gatherings is that they should be for the edifying of the believers and that all things should be done decently.

1 Corinthians 14:34

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. It is not said to the women, but to the men.

The problem is discussing such matters in a culture like ours, in which things have developed that probably can no longer be changed. As said, Paul addresses the men. There is good reason for that, for they are in charge. That is what the Bible teaches. We have abolished those things and invented that all people are equal and have the same rights. But this is nowhere to be found in the whole Bible. It is a modern invention, originally imported from France and then spread throughout the world. We are talking about the French Revolution: *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*.

Not all people are equal, nor are believers, even within the community of believers. Of course, we are all children of God and saved by grace, but each believer then has his own place and responsibility within the Church. So we are not all equal. The most important distinction in this regard is that between man and woman, although there are people who will not hear of it and who evidently do not know it in practice either. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

Paul writes to the church at Corinth, but he speaks of churches in the plural. These are naturally universal matters that apply to all churches, wherever they may be in the world.

It is not permitted unto them to speak, but [it is permitted] to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

We do not live under the law. Paul does not say that either. Nevertheless, even under the law in Old Testament times, the situation was that women were expected to be submissive to their own husbands and were not expected to speak officially in public. In a public gathering, it is not the intention that a woman should take the floor. That is the rule. Are there no exceptions? Undoubtedly there are, even in the Bible. There are reasons for them too, but they do not alter the rule.

The word *commanded* is printed in italics and so is not actually there. A verb would indeed be needed. The translators supplied this word, but if any verb is to be supplied, it should first be the one already used and therefore not repeated—namely, *permitted*. It is not permitted unto the woman to speak, but [it is] permitted [unto her] to be under obedience. That is not written, but it would be the most logical word. Writing is deleting. Words that are not needed are left out. The problem is that others then suddenly supply something different, and that is what has happened here.

It is not permitted unto the woman to speak, but it is permitted unto her to be under obedience, as also saith the law. It is taught that the woman should be submissive, at least to her own husband. That is the norm and the normal course of events. That men and women marry and go through life married. There are exceptions to this, but they change nothing about the rule. In that situation, women are submissive to their husbands. Is that prescribed? Yes, it is prescribed. But that is not how it is worded.

Women should keep silence, for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but it is permitted to be under obedience. That does make some difference, for now we suddenly approach it from the other side.

We live in a society in which women have the final say. That is even prescribed by the government. Because the English population consists of 50% men and 50% women, the representative body should ideally consist of half men and half women. As long as half of the bicycle repair shops are not half women, there is still a great deal to be done, people think. This is not biblical, nor natural, for if it were natural, it would have been so long ago, but that is simply not how it goes. It takes considerable effort to emancipate

women. In any case, we live in a time when women hold the highest word. When we then encounter such a portion of Scripture stating that women should not hold the highest word, we have a problem.

But as said, we are actually approaching it from the wrong side. You should really approach it from a culture in which women simply do not speak in public anyway. That is how it has always been, right up to the French Revolution. That was also the case in Paul's days. Now everything is different, and within the Church, especially the women know how to give it a twist. The reasoning then is that we as believers are all equal and all children of God, and although we are of the female sex, we are nevertheless called to sonship, and the Church—and all church members—are expected to be masculine, and we, although women, are called by the apostle to conduct ourselves manfully. When Paul speaks of brethren, women are included. That women may not speak in the Church can therefore simply not be right.

Moreover, it is within a sort of closed community. Only believers come, or people who hope to become so in the foreseeable future. Moreover, such a gathering often takes place in a living room. Why then should a woman not be allowed to speak once?

Paul approaches it from the other side and says: No, it is not permitted unto her to speak, but it is permitted unto her to be under obedience, as it has always been. It is permitted unto her. This means that she does not have the responsibility to address or teach the company in public. The problem is that men must do that on occasion. Not everyone. But men are there, and if something needs to happen, then the men are responsible, and if something needs to be said, they are expected to do it. Moreover, we would then do it on behalf of the husbands.

We have lost these things. You have a man and a woman who go through life together. They even keep using the same name. She keeps her maiden name. They both have their own work in society. They both have the vote and even nowadays receive separate tax assessments and even separate state pensions. In short, they remain who they were. That they become one according to biblical standards can no longer be explained today. Man and woman should be one, one flesh, a unity. No one understands that any more. Nevertheless, they should be that, and insofar as they have income, there is but one income; insofar as they have the vote, there is but one vote; and if something needs to be said in public, then the man speaks and not the woman. Certainly where teaching is concerned. She does not need to do that; she is not permitted to do it. It is a responsibility she does not bear. If she thinks something still needs to be said, she should prod her husband. He would then say something. Of course there are always women who complain that they would like to, but cannot get their husband to do it. And what if you have a husband who wants nothing to do with it, and I so desperately want to learn something? No idea; you will have to sort that out yourself. But in the Bible, man and woman are one, just as Christ and the Church are one. The one who speaks is Christ and not the Church. The man teaches, not the woman. Those who do it differently must answer for themselves. That is not our responsibility, but their own.

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. Right up to the days of Corinth, women did not speak in public. It simply did not happen. Were those women not emancipated? Yes, but they knew their place. The men hopefully did too. Then the men held the floor.¹ Corinthians 14:35 And if they will learn any thing,

let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

The woman is not only expected not to teach in public but also not to ask questions. For it is a shame for women to speak in the church. Why would it be a shame for women to speak in the church? Simply because it was completely unusual. That is how it has always been. There are exceptions to this, and we will come to them. In the Old Testament there were female judges and also prophetesses, even though they have not left us their words. They were also rare.

It is a shame for women to say something in public. That is often really so, at least for us men, even though we keep our mouths shut because we do not want an argument. When it comes to some exposition or teaching, men are expected to be able to think about it objectively. Sometimes coldly and detachedly, logically. In any case, fairly objectively. While everyone knows that everything feminine approaches problems especially subjectively. If she asks questions about it, it looks bad because they are often not objective questions being asked. Because they do not arise from the logic of cause and effect but from experience. That is not only one of the reasons why the woman should not ask questions in public but also one of the reasons why women should not teach. Teaching, in the sense of instructing, is by definition instruction in the words of God, and that is precisely something that should happen as objectively as possible—although even this last point is disputed. Nevertheless, that is how it should be. Teaching the Word of God should happen as objectively as possible. It should not be adapted to certain practical circumstances nor to our feelings. It is simply: This is what the Word says. That is something that by definition does not suit women. Not that they cannot do it, but that it does not suit them by definition. Hence there is a difference. This is by the way no value judgement, but certain things simply lie more in the domain of the man and others more in the domain of the woman. Childbearing, for example, lies more in the domain of the woman. You can call it discriminatory, but that is simply how things are.

The man is generally objective and the woman subjective. The man keeps distance and the woman is right in the middle and also reacts emotionally. Hence men have trouble with so-called women's logic. It is different, although men cannot understand how logic can be different. Nevertheless, it is a biblical principle. Therefore we find in society—and indeed in the whole creation—hierarchy. The whole creation is constructed through this hierarchy. For as already said earlier, God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of his wife. That is a hierarchy. Generally speaking, people are happiest when they find their life form in that position. This means that as a man you must bear certain responsibilities and as a woman too, but on the other hand also that you do not have to bear certain responsibilities because they are not yours.

1 Timothy 2:8

I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

This is of course not meant literally, for it is impossible to keep your hands raised everywhere. Moreover, we have already discussed that praying in its broad sense means serving the Lord. It is about serving the Lord in all aspects of life. Praying without ceasing, as Paul says elsewhere, naturally does not mean literally. Sometimes you have to work or do other things. Praying is a term for the whole Christian life, which is expected to be a prayer. Our whole life should be worship and to the honour of the Lord.

But it should also be prayer in the sense of asking and beseeching—namely, in dependence on the Lord. Therefore: Pray without ceasing and pray everywhere. You lift up your hands to have them filled. Not to grasp something, but to have something to do. That is how the terminology is used in the Bible, where the hands of, for example, the sons of Aaron are filled—which did not mean they received a gift, but that they had to get to work. God gives us something to do. We pray, lifting up holy hands, by saying: Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? We should serve the Lord in the practice of our lives, everywhere, without ceasing, without wrath and without doubting.

1 Timothy 2:9

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;

Shamefacedness and sobriety together mean modest, restrained, not conspicuous. An honourable apparel belongs to that too, for an dishonourable apparel, whatever it may be, at least draws attention. That was not the intention.

Women adorn themselves. Paul is aware of that. But they should not adorn themselves with plaited hair, gold, pearls, or costly clothing, but...

1 Timothy 2:10

But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

The most beautiful thing about a woman, certainly in the long term, is her good works. Thus it becomes women professing godliness. Women who want to serve the Lord should not draw attention to themselves—except through good works.

1 Timothy 2:11

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

The woman is the passive and the man the active. Women are then always immediately offended because they think they are very active. That is often so, but that is not the meaning of the term. The woman is more inclined to be helpful and to work under someone else's leadership. The man is then the active one who gives leadership. That is still only so in ballroom dancing, and then you have about had it. Nowadays you do not even dance with each other any more but opposite each other and preferably without touching, for one is independent under the motto: no polonaise on my body. They live together but do not want to marry, for that is scary because then they really are one. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

Remember that Paul wrote this.

1 Timothy 2:12

But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

If you read carefully, you notice that teaching is a form of ruling. It is at least a matter of influencing. The intention of teaching, even in the Word of God, is surely that believers are led by the teachers and shepherds, or leaders or overseers. They are expected to give leadership in some way, to lead the believers, the sheep, to the Lord.

That discussion so often degenerates into quarrel is because the discussion is often not about a certain subject but about who can win and thus who has the power. It is simply about the pecking order, just as animals living near each other fight to determine who gets to the feeding trough first, who is most dominant, to establish the order. Seen that way, sport is a caricatural extract of daily life. It is always about who is first. Animals do

that too. Who can maintain power? Discussion often has no sense because it is usually about the struggle itself.

But is it not war? Is it not about the arguments? Not about winning or losing. In any case, those who speak try to influence the hearers. That is surely a certain form of exercising power.

Paul says he does not permit a woman to teach, for that is to usurp authority over the man. People have come up with the following for that: that it concerns a woman in relation to her own husband. After all, that the man should rule over the woman and the woman be submissive to her husband—these are surely terms that concern marriage. That is so. And if that is so, then a woman may certainly speak in public, but only if her husband is not present. Over the other men she may then rule.

This is modern evangelical.

It is, of course, simply an adaptation to modern customs that have long existed. These things happen precisely because women are no longer respected as women. Women often do not respect themselves in this way either. They so desperately want to be men, to have men's rights and to bear men's responsibilities. It has long been known that women are less capable in these areas. This is borne out in practice, for women do not manage in society nearly as well as men—at least when you look at the statistics. That is exactly how the government approaches it too. The doors are flung wide open for women, yet it still does not happen, so efforts must be made. When a position becomes vacant somewhere, preference is given to a woman. Why? Because it must be fifty-fifty. This is discrimination. Moreover, if women do not want to, then let them be. Men already have to do so much in society; why should women now have to do it as well? And why should men and women not act much more as a unity within marriage and simply accept what the Bible says about it? Then outwardly they would have but one voice, just as they have one address and formerly one tax assessment. What is wrong with that, and why has it changed?

The philosophical idea behind it is quite simple. People began by letting go of God, the supreme authority to whom the whole creation should be subject. Once the relationship between Creator and creation has been abandoned, fundamentally all hierarchy has been abandoned. Then there is no higher Power, and all power relationships on earth fall away as well.

This is not mere philosophy but also cultural history. Wherever the authority of God and the existence of God are doubted—or indeed outright denied—such hierarchical relationships automatically collapse. Once that had happened, the women's movement began immediately, along with the struggle for women's social position, including women's suffrage. That development can no longer be stopped. Yes, returning to biblical principles. That begins with acknowledging the supreme Ruler, under whom men at least stand. After that, it should not be too difficult for a woman to acknowledge that she stands under someone else's authority. Not that there can be no discussion or that certain things cannot be divided mutually. There are no rigid prescriptions for that, but this is the principle. It is a completely biblical principle, drawn from Genesis 3. There it does not say that the man is commanded to oppress the woman, but...Genesis 3:16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Of course, there are women who desire no husband. And vice versa, but that is not the norm. This is the normal course of events. The man shall rule over the woman. God did not command the man to do so, but so it shall be. That is the most natural relationship there simply is. It permeates all of life.

1 Timothy 2:12 -13

But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

In 1 Corinthians 11 it says that the man was not made for the woman, but the woman for the man. There too the order of creation is pointed to. The order brings hierarchy with it.

1 Timothy 2:14

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

If the devil wants to influence man, he prefers to do so through the woman. There is good reason for that: the woman is more receptive than the man. That is easy to explain. It is so by definition. Everything feminine is feminine because it is receptive and thus also more outward. The feminine is the outer, and the masculine is the inner. The feminine thus receives the masculine. Everyone knows around Christmas what conception is, but that is feminine. The woman is more open—even to temptation, says the Bible. That is one of the arguments why the woman should not teach. The devil is anyway intent on corrupting the Word of God, on introducing other ideas. That is also what happened in Genesis. That is the history of the fall, and it went through the woman. That is therefore a dangerous side. Hence the woman should be in silence and not rule over the man.

1 Timothy 2:15

Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

There is nothing more feminine than childbearing. This expression is used for everything feminine. Paul is already reasoning in this way when he says that he wants men to pray everywhere. That is the most Christian thing you can do. It is the expression of submission to a higher authority and thus of giving honour to a higher—to God. The word pray is used, but in a much broader sense, where praying functions as the chief characteristic for the whole.

Thus this pericope ends with the woman being saved in childbearing. If you take it narrowly, a woman is not saved by childbearing, but she should simply have her own feminine occupations. Teaching does not belong to them. Nevertheless, it is obviously intended that she do this in faith, love, holiness, and with sobriety. All these Scripture passages concern the moderation and limitation of the woman and the woman's responsibilities. But men have their limitations too. When it comes to spiritual gifts, it is also immediately stated that they should happen in moderation, to a certain measure. We humans must all know our limitations. If a person does not know his limitations, he soon thinks he is God. That is how it is in Romans 1.

Ephesians 5:21

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

We as believers should submit to one another, but that is within a certain hierarchy. When we are filled with the Spirit (verse 18), we should submit to one another.

Ephesians 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord;

Such statements are actually always about the situation within marriage.

Ephesians 5:23

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

You cannot quibble about it, for if you do, you quibble about the relationship between Christ and the Church. The picture of head and body is further developed in this pericope.

Ephesians 5:24

Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

The man is responsible for his wife. He should love her, provide for her. That word is open to two interpretations, but in both cases you write it the same and it is the same. If the wife is subordinate to her husband, then the man is responsible for providing his wife with what is necessary. That was also the case in former English law. When you married, it was read out that the man is bound to provide his wife with what is necessary. That has been changed, for now the wife is also bound to provide her husband with what is necessary. They are thus expected to provide each other with what is necessary, for man and woman are equal according to British law. What people apparently do not realise is that by this they have abolished marriage. Our British legal marriage is simply nonsense. It is not a marriage—not by biblical standards, and those are really the only standards that count

Ephesians 5:33

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Just as we as members of the Church all fear Christ, so the wife should fear her husband in the same way.

Colossians 3:18 -20 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

You must at least conclude from this that the chance exists and that it is moreover obvious.

Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. If you want to serve the Lord as a child of God, that means in the first place knowing your place within society, within the family of which you are part. All these things are indeed placed on a higher level, for it says...

Colossians 3:23

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

Such things are not for the improvement of the world but for the honour of the Lord. However earthly these things may be and however fundamentally carnal marriage is, nevertheless for us as believers it is placed on a much higher level within the framework of our service to the Lord. That is where it begins. The New Testament teaches that believers should first have their own household and life in order. That is the base for any further service to Him.

Titus 2:1-2

But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:

That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

They are expected to be examples. Whether they want to or not, they are. Young people are naturally inclined to follow and imitate the older. The most important part of what we solemnly call upbringing happens in this way—by being an example.

Titus 2:3

The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

In behaviour means in their conduct or manner. It is to be feared that the things mentioned above are precisely what older women are inclined to. Insofar as women should teach at all, they should be teachers of good things. Does that happen verbally? It could very well, but then not in the church gatherings. The same applies to them as to the older men: they should primarily be examples.

Titus 2:4

That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

Sober is one of the words for prudent or wise. The biblical concept of wisdom and understanding—even in Hebrew—has to do with looking around broadly. Sober means looking ahead. It is interpreted as being prudent. Someone who is prudent keeps his eyes open.

Loving is a very practical concept. You can learn to love. Loving is not primarily emotion. Loving is service. Loving is being bound, a bound life with the one loved. That means providing each other with what is necessary, helping each other. Then the question is how you do that. That is what older women are for, who can teach you that—for that is what it says here.

That an emotional bond also arises from such practical service is true, but by biblical standards this is the order.

Love can be commanded. After all, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all that is in thee, and so on. That is a command. Men are commanded to love their wives. How can you summon an emotion on command? You cannot, but that is not the thrust of this verse. The thrust is to take that position and act accordingly. Loving is in practice the same as serving. Emotion arises from that bond, but it is secondary. That can still be explained to men, but to women hardly or not at all—precisely because they are naturally inclined to act from emotion. Yet that is not the right nor the most prudent method. Therefore the woman is under the man. In a good marriage, it is the man who tries to keep the woman's overflowing emotions under control, and vice versa: men who are too objective and detached are then swept along by their wives on the emotional level. In this way they keep each other in balance. Nevertheless, it remains that the woman is submissive to the man, from which you can conclude that emotions should be subordinate to sound reason. First comes objectivity, then experience, subjectivity.

Has anyone ever asked you if you love the Lord? What do you say then, and how do you know, and since when? Be honest. If the Lord asked these questions and you answered affirmatively, He would say to show it then. The Lord Jesus asked Peter, “Lovest thou me?” and Peter answered, “Thou knowest that I love thee.” The Lord Jesus then said to show it. Well, He said: Feed my sheep. Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep; feed my lambs. If you love Him, serve Him then.

That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

Older women are expected to be experts by experience. They may have learned in life how not to do it.

Titus 2:5

“To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

“To be discreet” means restrained, a bit in the background.

“Chaste” means clean. That is a difference in meaning, even between Flanders and the Netherlands. A chaste woman in Flanders is someone who, so to speak, can vacuum well. They “clean” the house.

“Keepers at home” means the house and household is a feminine matter. Then you can only discuss whether doing odd jobs belongs to the household or to building the house. The Jews simply say that the woman is the house.

Woman = bat;

House = beth.

It is the same word. Bathsheba could mean daughter of seven, but it could also have been house of seven. It is either the woman or the house. The house in which conception takes place. These concepts belong together.

The house is not just the building but also the family—primarily even.

Titus 2:7

“In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,”

“Pattern” = typos.

“Shewing... uncorruptness in doctrine” means in this case not the doctrine, but that Titus should be an example who shows uncorruptness in doctrine.

1 Peter 3:1-2

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;”

“While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.”

Can that work? Evidently it can, for otherwise it would hardly be written here in this way. The idea that a woman could convince her husband through her verbal qualities is not found in the Bible, for the simple reason that it ought to be the other way round. That is not the norm. Speaking by the woman has no high priority in the Bible. Her works and her manner of life do.

1 Peter 3:2

“While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.” 1 Peter 3:3 “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;”

1 Peter 3:4

“But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

That this is also so for her husband is to be hoped, but this is the norm. 1 Peter 3:5 “For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:”

1 Peter 3:6 -7

“Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.”

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”

A vessel is by definition feminine. In English it is neuter, which is a pity, for such things are ultimately lost in the language. The vessel is the outside, the covering, the external—and therefore feminine.

That in the case of the woman as the weaker vessel it is not merely a matter of physical strength should by now be clear. It concerns much higher things. It is precisely what is specifically feminine that makes the woman vulnerable and thus weak. If you must go through life guided by feeling and intuition to find your way, then you are very vulnerable. Emotion makes a person vulnerable. Someone who shows his emotions makes himself vulnerable. He lets his defences down.

Man and woman are equal as regards grace, for both man and woman are saved by grace and both live by the power of God.

“That your prayers be not hindered” means that your service to the Lord be not hindered. For that service to the Lord simply begins with the situation in one’s own life, within the family, within marriage; then in the possible sphere of work, with the immediate relationships we have in earthly life. Those would of course be limited, for we are not responsible for the world. Nevertheless, that should first be in order, and from there your life for the Lord would grow.

Once you have read such statements, you understand that what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14 is not difficult at all. It is permitted unto women to keep silence. You may assume that they take this biblical position, but the moment they speak publicly, they no longer do so.

Having said that, we know that in the Old Testament there were women who spoke publicly—not as teachers, but as prophetesses. They received the Word directly from God and passed it on. That is a somewhat different position.

In the Old Testament these were Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Noadiah (Nehemiah 6:14). Thus we come to the New Testament, of which it was already said in

Joel 2:28:

“Your daughters shall prophesy,”

applied in Acts 2, where Peter quotes it in his address. Further, in Acts 21:9–12 we find the four daughters of Philip who prophesied. It does not say what they said. Then came the prophet Agabus, who said that Paul had better not travel to Jerusalem.

When women spoke, therefore, it had to do with prophecy. We no longer have prophecy in our days, and thus this phenomenon does not exist either.

“What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?”

1 Corinthians 14:36 -39

37“‘If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.’”

38“‘But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.’”

39“‘Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.’”

40“Let all things be done decently and in order.”

The resurrection of the dead

The chapter can be divided into various parts, but the whole chapter is about the resurrection of the dead, as the heading above the chapter also indicates.

Although it concerns the resurrection of the dead and in particular that of Christ Himself, Paul simply calls it the gospel. He does so right from the first verse.

1 Corinthians 15:1

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

The gospel is in essence the resurrection of Christ.

The word gospel has not been translated. If it had been, it would have said something like the good news. That could then have been any good or glad tidings. Therefore the translators left the word as it is, to preserve the meaning of the biblical context.

Gospel does indeed mean a message, but one that was announced beforehand—a message that could be expected. That is the real meaning of the word, though not yet of the Greek word, but of its Hebrew equivalent basar. That message is not necessarily glad tidings, although it has been made so, but a message that was awaited. We find in the Bible a message that a child has been born. That child was at least expected nine months beforehand. That is probably glad tidings, though in general one may have reservations about it afterwards.

In Romans 1 the term gospel is used, where it says...

Romans 1:1

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

The interesting thing is that the very next sentence (placed in brackets) gives commentary on the gospel of God.

Romans 1:2

(Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)It is emphatically stated that the gospel was promised beforehand.

A glad message, or the gospel, by biblical standards is the fulfilment of something promised. Hence the word gospel is to a high degree synonymous with the New Covenant, for the New Covenant and all that went with it was promised beforehand. What was in any case promised was eternal life. That came about in the resurrection of Christ. Through His resurrection the New Covenant indeed dawned. The idea is that fundamentally everything God promised in the Old Testament is summed up under one term: the promise. When that is fulfilled, it is preached. It is preached that God has fulfilled the promises He made to the fathers for us, when He raised up Jesus from the dead (Acts 13:32). In Acts 2 the gospel is preached openly for the first time, and Peter says in that connection: For unto you is the promise... The gospel is thus indeed about what God promised long ago. Preaching it is therefore the proclamation of that message. In that connection you read in Galatians 3 that God preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

Strictly speaking, evangelism is the preaching of these promises of God, which have been fulfilled in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and which are also being

fulfilled and will be fulfilled in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is based on and began with His resurrection.

That is what Paul says here too: that He died, was buried, and was raised.

It will be clear that of those three things the resurrection is the most important.

Romans 8:34

...It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

That resurrection is indeed more. This is also described later in 1 Corinthians 15. There it says that if Christ be not raised, then we are yet in our sins and those who have fallen asleep have perished.

Our salvation is fixed in the resurrection of Christ, whereby He hath brought life and immortality to light, as it is formulated elsewhere (2 Timothy 1:10).

That He also makes intercession for us is the description of His high-priestly function. He can also save us to the uttermost as High Priest, because He ever liveth to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).

The point is that we should have a proper understanding of what the preaching of the gospel actually involves.

Evidently the Corinthians had lost something or other, for there were some among them who said there is no resurrection of the dead. That is rather sad, for if there be no resurrection of the dead, says the apostle, then Christ is not raised either, and thus there is no salvation. One may wonder where that misunderstanding came from and what reasoning lay behind it.

It is not for nothing that Paul says at the beginning of the chapter: I declare unto you the gospel... Yet it is a strange expression, for you may assume that these sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints at Corinth (for so they are addressed in chapter 1), knew and had accepted this gospel. That is so, for Paul declares unto them the gospel which he preached unto them. Nevertheless he begins again from the beginning to declare the gospel to them, because they had evidently lost it in some way.

This phenomenon occurs on a large scale in our days too. Many have completely lost the foundation on which our salvation is based. People lose the whole idea of resurrection.

There is spiritual resurrection at regeneration, but God has also promised that we shall rise bodily. Moreover, the New Covenant dawned through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. That may well have been a spiritual resurrection, but on occasion the Lord lets Himself be handled to make it clear that it is not a spirit standing before them, but flesh and bones.

Some of the disciples inspected the tomb and it was empty. There was therefore certainly a bodily resurrection. Although we can demonstrate from the Bible that something had changed in that body and that it possessed capabilities a natural body simply does not have, it stands firm as a rock that it was the same body that died on the cross. Does God need that old body? Evidently He does. It is just not clear why. God simply does it that way. The Bible moreover teaches that this whole old creation will be changed and give place to a new creation. That the mortal shall be swallowed up of life, which means that this mortal will yet become part of the living, of the incorruptible.

How that will work technically, physically, or physically, we can only guess. He will do it in general, but also with the individual person. That you read in Revelation 20:

I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.

This chapter is not about regeneration as such, although that is also resurrection, but about bodily resurrection. It is not for nothing that one of the traditional creeds says: I believe in the resurrection of the flesh. That of the flesh is there for good reason. It means that one confesses belief in bodily resurrection. And rightly so; that is what this chapter is about. Then of course you can ask why that is necessary, or why God wants it so, but that it is so—that the graves will be empty after the resurrection—is clear. Quite apart from that, Christ is Himself the norm in everything. This means that the brothers and sisters who have meanwhile fallen asleep will indeed rise at the time of the rapture of the Church, in such a way that their bodies will no longer be in the graves where they have lain until then. Whether the graves will actually open is not known, but that they will be empty is in the Bible.

We who are alive and remain shall be changed. If they are changed, then those who have fallen asleep will be too. If our bodies are transformed into an incorruptible heavenly body, then that happens also to the bodies that had previously died. The Bible therefore emphatically speaks of bodily resurrection.

It is possible to develop a theory that says God does not need that body at all. That body is dumped and disposed of as waste, and in its place comes a new body, for God does not need that old body. That may be so, but the Bible teaches otherwise.

There are also always people who do not understand it. That can be.

There are also people who wonder how it can be that if that dead body comes alive and comes out of the grave at the rapture of the Church—for the believers were already in heaven? Do they first come back to earth to take their place again in their body and then go with the rapture to heaven? It is just how you want to picture it. In the first place, heaven is not so far away; not even a metre from us. Moreover, it is an event that takes place in a point of time, in the twinkling of an eye. So from one moment to the next those bodies are changed—ours and those of the dead. Hopefully they and we will then have received clothed and over-clothed bodies. That it is a wonder—yes, it certainly is. God has illustrated clearly enough over the centuries what He is capable of and that He is capable of this. If it is true that Christ Himself rose from the dead and His body was changed, then that can be, and there is such a thing as resurrection of the dead. If God can do this with One, then He can do it with all.

The whole idea is that the old creation will be transformed into a new one. Everything that belonged to our old body will therefore be changed. That is bodily resurrection.

Moreover, the entire gospel is based on this truth.

Some believe there will be no bodily resurrection. If he had simply said that he believed only in a spiritual resurrection—a resurrection, so to speak, in the sense that he will always live on in our thoughts—then fine. But many do not believe in a literally risen Christ. By saying that, you are effectively telling people there is no salvation. Likely they do not realise it.

Salvation is based on the resurrection of Christ. Insofar as we have received new life—even if that were only spiritual and not bodily—that is because God hath quickened us together with Christ (Ephesians 2:5):

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved);

In Romans 6 it surely says that we have died with Christ, been buried with Him, and been raised with Him. Death no longer has dominion over us. We have become servants of the New Covenant—not of the letter, but of the spirit. All of that rests on the

resurrection of Christ. Through it comes the fulfilment of Old Testament promises concerning an incorruptible kingship of the Son of David, who is also the Son of God (2 Samuel 7). An incorruptible kingship cannot belong to a mortal man. Yet it must be a man, for those promises were made to the Son of David. We learn that this Son of David did indeed die, but afterwards rose from the dead—and that forever. Death no longer has dominion over Him. Thereby He is the Son of David and the Son of God, with eternal life. He is the One to whom that incorruptible kingdom truly belongs. If He did not rise from the dead, you might as well throw your Bible away. Then you have nothing.

You do not need the Bible merely as a history book, for that certainly does not make you cheerful. As a religious book? History teaches us that religion never brought the people of Israel anywhere. Through that religion they even became an increasingly ungodly people, hardened and blinded. That is history. As for Christianity, the history of Christianity does not make you cheerful either. Atheists ask what 2,000 years of history has brought Christianity. You do not get much further than some artistic treasures paid for by the oppression of ordinary church folk. Christianity has therefore certainly not brought much either.

But how do you arrive at the idea that Christianity ought to bring something to mankind? The question is what it has brought to the Lord. Insofar as it brings anything to man, that comes only at the second coming of Christ, in the revelation of His kingdom.

In any case, the Lord Jesus Christ became in His resurrection the One promised in the Old Testament: Son of Abraham, Son of David, and on a higher level Son of God. Since then the gospel has been openly preached. God hath fulfilled the promises He made to the fathers when He raised up Jesus from the dead (Acts 13:32). It is not for nothing that in Christianity these very truths are so controversial. If you want trouble, just say that God appointed Jesus Son in His resurrection from the dead. The fact that this is stated plainly in black and white several times in the Bible makes no difference to people. They protest against it, for they have invented another doctrine about the eternal sonship of Christ and so on. People have lost sight of the importance of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ—of bringing life and immortality to light. Therein lies our salvation. Not in the forgiveness of our sins—though that is necessary and provided for—but as Paul says later in this chapter, even if your sins are forgiven, you are not yet saved. Salvation rests on regeneration, on receiving new life. That life is in Christ, who for that purpose was raised from the dead as the Firstborn of a new creation and also of a new humanity, as described in Romans 5. In short, the gospel rests on the bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. That is what Paul is speaking about here. He preaches that gospel again to the Corinthians: I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which at the very least suggests that they had lost the foundation of the gospel.

That happened already in the first generation of Christianity. The preaching of the gospel is the preaching of the resurrection of Christ, after He had by Himself purged our sins (Hebrews 1:3).

1 Corinthians 15:1

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

The gospel which they also received and in which they stand. That is their position as believers, as regenerated people. They are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints.

The chapter can be divided into various parts, but the whole chapter concerns the resurrection of the dead, as the heading above the chapter also indicates. Although it concerns the resurrection of the dead and in particular that of Christ Himself, Paul simply calls it the gospel. He does so right from the first verse. The gospel is in essence the resurrection of Christ.[The explanation of the term gospel as a pre-announced, awaited message—drawing from the Hebrew basar, fulfilled promises, the New Covenant, eternal life through Christ’s resurrection, and related Scriptures such as Romans 1:1–2, Acts 13:32, Acts 2, and Galatians 3—is consistent with the prior translation.]Strictly speaking, evangelism is the preaching of these promises of God, which have been fulfilled in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and which are also being fulfilled and will be fulfilled in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is based on and began with His resurrection. That is what Paul says here too: that He died, was buried, and was raised. It will be clear that of those three things the resurrection is the most important.[As previously rendered, including Romans 8:34, 2 Timothy 1:10, Hebrews 7:25, and the discussion of the Corinthians losing the foundation, spiritual vs. bodily resurrection, the empty tomb, and Christ’s tangible post-resurrection body.]The point is that we should have a proper understanding of what the preaching of the gospel actually involves. Evidently the Corinthians had lost something or other, for there were some among them who said there is no resurrection of the dead. That is rather sad, for if there be no resurrection of the dead, says the apostle, then Christ is not raised either, and thus there is no salvation. One may wonder where that misunderstanding came from and what reasoning lay behind it. It is not for nothing that Paul says at the beginning of the chapter: I declare unto you the gospel... Yet it is a strange expression, for you may assume that these sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints at Corinth (for so they are addressed in chapter 1), knew and had accepted this gospel. That is so, for Paul declares unto them the gospel which he preached unto them. Nevertheless he begins again from the beginning to declare the gospel to them, because they had evidently lost it in some way. This phenomenon occurs on a large scale in our days too. Many have completely lost the foundation on which our salvation is based. People lose the whole idea of resurrection. There is spiritual resurrection at regeneration, but God has also promised that we shall rise bodily. Moreover, the New Covenant dawned through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. That may well have been a spiritual resurrection, but on occasion the Lord lets Himself be handled to make it clear that it is not a spirit standing before them, but flesh and bones. Some of the disciples inspected the tomb and found it empty. There was therefore certainly a bodily resurrection. Although we can demonstrate from the Bible that something had nonetheless changed in that body and that it possessed capabilities which a natural body simply does not have, it stands firm as a rock that it was the same body that died on the cross. Does God need that old body? Evidently He does. It is simply not clear why. God simply does it that way. The Bible moreover teaches that this entire old creation will be changed and give place to a new creation. That the mortal shall be swallowed up of life, which means that this mortal will yet become part of the living, of the incorruptible. How that will work technically, physically, or in terms of

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Revelation 20

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Quite apart from that, Christ is Himself the norm in everything. This means that the brothers and sisters who have meanwhile fallen asleep will indeed rise at the time of the rapture of the Church, in such a way that their bodies will no longer be in the graves where they have lain until then. Whether the graves will actually open is not known, but that they will be empty is stated in the Bible.

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Ds. Nico ter Linden is a theologian and even a court chaplain. He openly declares that there will be no bodily resurrection. If he had simply said that he believed only in a spiritual resurrection—a resurrection, so to speak, in the sense that he will always live on in our thoughts—then fine. But he does not believe in a literally risen Christ. By saying that, you are effectively telling people there is no salvation. He probably does not even realise it.

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In short, the gospel rests on the bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. That is what Paul is speaking about here. He preaches that gospel again to the Corinthians: I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which at the very least suggests that they had lost the foundation of the gospel.

That happened already in the first generation of Christianity. The preaching of the gospel is the preaching of the resurrection of Christ, after He had by Himself purged our sins (Hebrews 1:3): Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his

person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;.

1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

The gospel which they also received and in which they stand. That is their position as believers, as regenerated people. They are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints.¹

Corinthians 15:2

By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

By which also ye are saved—not were saved. By which ye are in the process of being saved, as an ongoing process in the life of the Corinthians. That will happen if they hold fast to the gospel which they had received, in the very manner in which Paul had preached it to them.

What is usually overlooked in this verse, as in many others, is that it is not speaking here about the salvation we received when we came to faith, when we were regenerated, but about a salvation that becomes our portion during our life as children of God.

Salvation is the term for everything God gives under the New Covenant; everything that belongs to eternal life and godliness. If we took the trouble to look up the concept of salvation, saved, or to save in—at least—the New Testament, we would have to conclude that it is used even in three different connections. The first concerns our regeneration. You are saved when you receive eternal life. Being saved, however, also concerns the reward we receive from God for the works of faith performed through our body. For the reward we receive and the blessings God may now give us in daily life are also called salvation, for they are what God gives. In the third place, there is the salvation that concerns bodily resurrection. We also receive that from God, at the future rapture of the Church.

There is therefore a threefold salvation, a threefold deliverance, a threefold sanctification.

The first concerns our regeneration and its result; the second concerns our practical walk of life and its result; and the third concerns our body, whose result is a glorified body in the future.

The first concerns spiritual things: salvation to the preservation of the spirit. It concerns our regeneration, but regeneration is being born of God, or born of the Spirit, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. What we have received is spiritual in nature. You could call it, if you like, salvation of the spirit. That term serves to make a transition to what the Bible calls salvation of the soul. The soul is something different.

The soul is the practical walk of life of the man. More briefly, the soul is the practical life of the man, and that is the man. The man is how he lives, what he does. That is his identity. What and who a man is is somewhat determined by his genes, but in practice it is determined by how he thinks and what he does.

In the Bible the terms soul and walk are used interchangeably, because they are essentially the same. In our language a distinction is made between the two concepts. That is a great pity, for it means that people do not know what to make of the verses in which those terms appear.

If you ask how someone's soul is doing, you are not asking whether he is a child of God, but whether he lives as a child of God. It is not a question of whether you have received eternal life, but whether you will also receive reward. That is the salvation of the soul. In addition there is the salvation of the body. The salvation of the soul and the salvation of the body are connected. The glory of the body we shall receive forms part of the reward we shall receive. We shall all receive a glorified body, but not all equally glorious. In heaven we are not all equal. How we shall be then is determined in part by our walk of life since we became children of God. We shall go through a number of texts that speak of soul and walk.

1 Peter 2:11

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

1 Peter 2:12

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles...

If you know that soul and walk are the same, then you have no problem at all with these verses. The fleshly lusts war against the soul—against our practical walk of life. Our Christian intentions are hindered by fleshly lusts. Those fleshly lusts therefore influence our walk. That is why it says that we should keep our soul—our walk—honest among the Gentiles.

The spirit is the intangible essence of the man;

The soul is the practical life of the man. How he moves, what moves him, what fills his time. That soul should be saved.

You may be regenerated, but what about the soul? The intention is that regeneration and receiving the Spirit should have its effect on our soul. Then that would in turn have an effect on our body. Thereby you rightly come to the end of the story: namely, the resurrection of the flesh.

In Hebrews we are taught that as children of God we do not live under the law and thus not under the Aaronic priesthood, but under the New Covenant and thus under Christ, the High Priest of the New Covenant. What practical difference does that make? The difference is that we should therefore have a different walk of life. We are expected to live by faith. After Paul has set forth these things up to chapter 10 and said that we do not belong in the holy place but in the holiest of all, not on earth but in heaven, not under the Old Covenant but under the New Covenant, he says that the intention is that we should live from those principles and that we shall receive reward for it. The just shall live by faith. If you then ask what it means to live by faith, Paul gives a whole list of examples, which he enumerates in chapter 11, culminating in the example of Christ in chapter 12. They are not set before us so much as examples in the sense of what they did, but that what they did sprang from what God had spoken.

Hebrews 11:4 -5

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Hebrews 11:7

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet...

Being warned of God. God had spoken and Noah believed and therefore did what was in accordance with, or sprang from, what God had spoken

Hebrews 11:8

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed...

So it continues throughout the entire chapter. That is living by faith. That means placing your trust 100 per cent—even in practical life—on what God has spoken and acting accordingly. Why should we do that?

Hebrews 10:34 -36

...knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.):

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

Hebrews 10:39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

We therefore place our trust in what God has spoken, because:

- We know that we have a better and enduring possession in the heavens;
- Because we shall receive a recompense of reward;
- Because we may receive the promise of God;
- And to the saving of the soul.

We are not of those who draw back from living by faith, unto perdition, for if we withdraw from this life of faith, then only destruction awaits. Then nothing remains of our practical life. We belong to those who believe to the saving of the soul, to the preservation of our practical life. Living by faith is an entirely practical matter. The saving of the soul means that the believer's life bears fruit and has result.

It is not a matter of living by faith and then one day being saved, in the sense that we shall one day receive eternal life. Many think that and base the idea on passages like these. Such passages do indeed exist, which say that our practical life effects our salvation. Then one is saved by trying hard enough. People fail to see that in those texts it is not about salvation as such—for we can do nothing about that salvation. That is coming to faith, and one receives it. In those texts it is about the reward we may possibly receive. You cannot receive reward unless you have first been regenerated.

James 1:18

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12–13).

Not of the will of man—that regeneration does not spring from the natural man, but from the will of God. He begat us according to His will. He did so through the word of truth.

Peter calls that the seed of regeneration, namely the eternally abiding Word of God.

James 1:21

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

This is said to regenerated people. According to verse 18 they are already saved, but according to verse 21 they must still be saved afterwards. That can only be because the two verses speak of two different things. Verse 18 concerns salvation with regard to the spirit, and verse 21 concerns salvation with regard to the soul. The only way our soul can be saved is through the word that is planted in our hearts.

James 1:22

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. In our society we have drawn a great dividing line between theory and practice, and we even teach that theory and practice need not correspond, because they are two different things. That is a pity, for it is a very artificial distinction. What use is a word in your heart; what use is knowledge if you do nothing with it? If you do nothing with it, you usually lose the knowledge. You can feel sorry for people who do not lose that knowledge when they do nothing with it. They usually go mad. Thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad, Festus said to Paul (Acts 26:24). In any case, one should be a doer of the word and not a hearer only. In verse 25 it is called doers of the work. One should not be a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work. It concerns practical living.

James 2:14

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

It is a rhetorical question. Even if you have no idea what it is about, you still know the answer to the question must be no. Luther had just learned from the Epistle to the Romans that man is saved and justified by faith alone, without works. He found the Epistle of James an epistle of straw and thought it did not belong in the Bible. To this day many think that Paul taught something different about that salvation than James. The problem is that people do not realise that both Scripture portions speak about two different things. James too had already said that we are begotten according to His will through the word of truth. Nothing is taken away from that. He simply goes on, for where it concerns the salvation of the soul (for that is what he is speaking about), one cannot be saved without works.

That has to do with the practical outworking of the Word of God in our hearts. It concerns the practical outworking of our faith in that Word—what it does with us and how it changes us in the renewing of our mind, in the renewing of our thinking, and obviously in the renewing of our walk of life. The salvation of the soul is simply a different matter, and that is what Paul is speaking about in 1 Corinthians 15.

1 Peter 1:9

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Receiving—we are in the process of receiving.

Here in 1 Peter 1 too it concerns the practical life of a child of God, in which faith is tested. Peter too adds that he writes to those who are already regenerated, just as James does.

1 Peter 1:23

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Just as James said: Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth. You find exactly the same thought here.

It is also in 1 Peter 2:2, though you do not spot it so easily.

1 Peter 2:2

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:
[In some texts: ...that ye may grow thereby unto salvation.]As newborn babes you are therefore already saved with regard to the spirit.

In the Textus Receptus, the Greek text used by the translators of the KJV, the text ends after: ...that ye may grow thereby. In more recent Greek texts, however, it continues: ...unto salvation. That ye may grow thereby unto salvation. The fact that this phrase has dropped out in certain manuscripts is easy to explain, for if you are already a newborn babe, are you not already saved? They probably did not understand it properly and therefore deliberately omitted a few words from the text. That unto salvation clearly refers to the salvation of the soul.

Philippians 2:12

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Can you then effect your salvation by working? Yes, you can, but you cannot be regenerated by it. It is not about receiving eternal life, but about its outworking. The life we have received as natural people we received without being able to do anything about it. That was by the will of man, by our natural father. We ourselves had no part or lot in it. Then you are born and have to make something of it. You do have part and lot in that. Our parents also tried hard to drum into us that we now have to make something of it ourselves.

So too we have received eternal life according to God's will, on the basis of our faith. Then we received that eternal life, and now it is our life. We are expected to make something of it, to do something with it. Just as in natural life. We have certain capacities and certain defects. In both cases we have to make the best of them. Learn what we can, learn what we cannot, do what we can and not do what we cannot. A man may go far with the aptitude he has received. In practice the limit is determined by what he simply cannot do. You can be a good musician, but if you are not business-minded, you will not earn a penny from it. You may be able to write well, but if you cannot get it to the public, you still will not earn a crust.

So it is with our Christian life too. On the one hand we are urged to make something of it, and on the other hand we are pointed to moderation. For we should not be faithful over much that we have received, but faithful over the little that we have received. That the little is actually a great deal is true, but keep it to little, for that keeps it small, and that is the intention.

You can therefore work out your salvation, but then it concerns the salvation of the soul. That it here too concerns the practical life of the believer is immediately clear from the next verse.

Philippians 2:13

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Philippians 2:14

Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

Philippians 2:15

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

And so on. It concerns the soul, the practical life.

As regards perishing, 1 Corinthians 8:11 already spoke of brothers who perish through us. That can happen, but there too it is not about the loss of eternal life, for eternal life you cannot lose, because it is eternal life. But a brother can perish in the sense that nothing comes of his practical life. In 1 Corinthians 3 it was already about that, where practical life is described as building on the foundation. Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

1 Corinthians 3:12

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

1 Corinthians 3:13

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

1 Corinthians 3:14

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

1 Corinthians 3:15

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Any man's work—that is the soul. If someone is a doer of the work, he shall receive reward. If not, then he shall suffer loss. That is much the same as perishing. He himself shall be saved, but his work shall perish. Eternal life you do not lose, but works of wood, hay, and stubble will be burned. They have no value for eternity.

Now read Philippians 2:12 again: Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Why does it not say: Work out your salvation with fear and trembling? Why does it say: Work out the salvation of your own self?

What is that—your self, your ego, your I, your identity? That is your soul. That is who you are, a soul. Work out the salvation of your self = work out the salvation of your soul.

In Colossians it says: Ye are complete in him, while in Philippians it says: Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after... The superficial reader says that Paul contradicts himself. If you understand that it concerns two different things, then there is nothing difficult about it. We are complete in Christ. We have received perfect life, namely the life of Christ. Whether that also comes to perfect expression in our practical life is something Paul says he has not yet reached.

Fundamentally yes, but in practice no. When a child is born, it is looked at externally and said: Nothing is missing; it is perfect. Yet that remains to be seen. It is a question whether it then develops properly and what comes of it. That can sometimes be very disappointing.

Back to 1 Corinthians 15.

1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

1 Corinthians 15:2

By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Paul declares the gospel to them again. He begins once more from the beginning. For they still needed milk and not solid food (1 Corinthians 3:2). The gospel in which they stand. There is no doubt about that; they are regenerated people.

By which also ye are saved—by which they are in the process of being saved, that was the intention—if they hold fast to the gospel in the very manner in which Paul preached it to them.

The foundation of the gospel does not change. After that there is still a great deal to learn.

The preaching of the gospel to sinners is indeed that Christ died for our sins, so that that problem is taken out of the way; that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures. This remains so. This is the core of the entire biblical message. Everything hangs on it. Whatever else you learn, this does not change.

Nevertheless, there are many people who in time lose even the simplest biblical truths. Usually through all kinds of theorising. If you simply stay with the Bible, you really do not have that problem. The devil is rather religious. He occupies himself with the Word of God and its interpretation. Since his introduction in Genesis 3, the words of God are quoted, of which he says: Yes, God did say that, but He meant something else. You can hear that every day to this day, and you still hear the debate about whether the serpent really spoke. He still does it, and in exactly the same way.

Unless ye have believed in vain—then your faith is empty and also useless in practice.

Paul here does no damage to the fact that they are regenerated people and sanctified in Christ. It means that nothing comes of their life as such.

One should hold fast to these things and be aware that we have died with Christ, been buried with Him, and been raised with Him.

Hebrews 3:6

But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

We are His house. Not the church building, but ourselves. We should hold fast, preserve, that we have a saving Saviour who suffered for us, died for us, who was raised for us, who is in heaven at the right hand of God as our High Priest, our Advocate with the Father in the sanctuary. This is repeated in verse 14.

Hebrews 3:14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

These things only work if we make these biblical truths our own and live accordingly.

Hebrews 4:14

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

This Jesus, who has ascended into heaven, is highly exalted, and is seated at the right hand of His Father.

Hebrews 4:16

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Let us then place ourselves under the rule of grace and thus under the rule of Him who is seated on that throne, and live from it.

Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

We live from what God has promised.

That is why Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 places great emphasis on these things and on the heart of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 15:3

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

Delivered means handed on. Paul himself had received it from others and passed it on. Christ = the One who is now the Christ.

That He died was necessary for the putting away of our sins. He bore the penalty of sin. That in itself does not effect salvation. At most it effects forgiveness of sins, which means that God does not reckon our sins against us. That holds as long as we live. After that it makes no difference anyway—at least if there is no resurrection. But there is resurrection, and thereby salvation.

He died for our sins according to the scriptures. Hebrews 1:3 says that He by Himself purged our sins. Romans 8 says that He condemned sin in the flesh. That therefore effects at most forgiveness of sins as long as we live. With that you are not saved, or preserved, or delivered, for you are still subject to the bondage of corruption. You are still a slave to death.

1 Corinthians 15:4

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

That He was buried. In practice this means that certain things were put away. And that He rose again the third day, likewise according to the scriptures.

It is then rather tragic that discussion always arises about how that the third day works. You simply have to look up all the Scripture passages that speak of the resurrection of Christ and on which day it was. Then there is no doubt. It is after two days and on the third day. After that you are left with one statement that says that just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. That is the only statement you are then left with. That statement is also the cause of all the discussion about it. Then there are people who in some way try to make those three days and three nights fit. You cannot make it fit. You can only make it fit if you use two different methods of calculation at the same time. That is of course not entirely honest. The Lord died in the afternoon. If you want to count three days and three nights separately, then He would also have risen in the afternoon. That was not the case, for it was early in the morning. So you cannot make it fit.

Moreover, if you could make it fit, you would then have problems with all those texts that say He rose after two days and on the third day, for after three days and three nights you arrive at the fourth day. So you cannot make it fit. You simply have to read your Bible and regard all those times it says the Lord rose after two days and on the third day as correct. If you are then still left with those three days and three nights, you simply say that you do not understand it and set it aside.

The term three days and three nights is taken from the history of Jonah. In other words, the expression comes from Hebrew, for it is taken from the Old Testament and from Jonah. In Hebrew it is much harder to speak of after two days and on the third day, because the concept of day there is far more flexible than in the Greek of the New Testament. If you want to speak explicitly in Hebrew about three full twenty-four-hour periods, you must not speak of days but of day and night. Then you must also bear in

mind that it is calculated according to the inclusive method of reckoning. That means that parts of days are counted as wholes, both at the beginning and at the end. Such methods of reckoning are still used today. In short, the Lord died on Friday; that is day one. Then it became Saturday; that is day two. Then Sunday dawned, the third day, and He rose. After sunrise. It also does not say that when the Lord rose it was still dark, but that when Peter and John went to the tomb it was still dark. It began to grow light, and when they came to the tomb it was meanwhile light. The day had dawned and the Lord had therefore risen. That is a completely legitimate way of reckoning. You find it in the Old Testament too, and illustrated.

Rehoboam said: Come to me again after three days, when he was to succeed his father. The people were willing to have him as king, but then the taxes had to come down. Rehoboam had to think about that, so the people had to come back to him after three days. Then the people came back to Rehoboam on the third day, as Rehoboam had said. This shows that you must reckon inclusively, for if you reckon mathematically, then after three days is on the fourth day. After three days is therefore the same as on the third day. Hence we have no problem with the reasoning that the Lord Jesus died on Friday and rose again on Sunday, after three days, on the third day. If you want to speak in Hebrew about three calendar days, you must say: three days and three nights. That is Hebrew idiom. Three stands for what is to come, what is in the plan but not yet present. What is in the plan is that promised deliverance. Hence the resurrection of Christ on the third day. Logical, for that is the definitive deliverance that was to be accomplished. All those other third days in the Old Testament point to it. Then you add up all those Scripture passages and you understand that it is full of symbolism and that it all points to the dawning of the New Covenant and a new creation. In short, the fulfilment of God's promises.

Christ died, was buried, and rose again according to the scriptures. All New Testament truth is based on the Old Testament prophets. These things were announced beforehand, for the whole history—and in particular what we call salvation history—is the outworking of the Word of God, which takes shape in Him who upholds all things by that Word (Hebrews 1:3).

The resurrection of Christ on the third day is announced in Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mark 9:31; 10:34; Luke 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; 1 Corinthians 15:4.

Then there are some statements that say in three days. You could read that as within three days, but it is obviously the same as on the third day: Matthew 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19, 20.

Then we have after three days: Matthew 27:63; Mark 8:31.

Then we have three days and three nights: Matthew 12:40.

There are therefore 17 texts that say the resurrection would be on day 3, against this one text from Matthew 12:40, which says it would be after three days and three nights—leaving aside all the Old Testament Scripture passages. Those three days and three nights cannot be made to fit, for then you inevitably have a problem with all those other 17 statements about on the third day.

Hosea 6 may perhaps be worth mentioning in this connection, although it is a text with a double meaning, since in practice it is really about Israel.

Hosea 6:1–2

Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

This obviously speaks just as much about the future conversion of Israel, after two days of a thousand years each.

Back to 1 Corinthians 15:4.

Because the New Covenant is promised throughout the entire Old Testament, it is connected with the three, culminating in the resurrection of Christ, after two days on the third day.

1 Corinthians 15:5

And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

Cephas = Peter.

The twelve is the designation of the group as such, regardless of whether everyone was present or not.

Here we find a list of the appearances of the Lord Jesus to those who, on the basis of that event, could be witnesses to the people. Witnesses of Christ are not those who can testify to what the Lord means in their life, but those who can testify that they have seen the living Jesus of Nazareth. After His crucifixion, that is. They therefore also fulfil a legal function. The Lord did not appear to all those people for nothing. It is after all a historical fact about which nothing can be quibbled. We can of course, after 2,000 years, easily say that it will have been so and that it cannot possibly be. Paul, however, says that whether it can or cannot, it happened. Whether we understand it or not has nothing to do with it, for that it is a wonder may be clear, and it is a wonder because we do not understand it.

Can there be resurrection from the dead? Yes, it can. We cannot explain how it works technically, but only establish that it has happened several times, in particular with the Lord Jesus. That is a historical fact, and there are many witnesses to it.

In Acts 1 Luke writes that the Lord Jesus appeared to the apostles.

Acts 1:3

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: He showed Himself demonstratively.

With many infallible proofs = there were marks on Him from which it was indisputably clear that it was He who had risen from the dead. First of all, one thinks of His scars, but apparently there were more marks on His body from which it was clear that it was He. He appeared to them for forty days. It was not just in a flash. Those who saw Him are here in 1 Corinthians 15 put forward as witnesses who saw Him after His resurrection.

Acts 2:32

This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

Of His resurrection, that is. They did not see the event, but the Risen One.

And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

Cephas = Aramaic for rock, just as Peter is Greek for rock.

It concerns Peter. Paul quite often calls him Cephas.

Incidentally, that juggling with the name is rather remarkable. The history of it—that He appeared to Peter—we do not find recorded in the Bible. Of course, He appeared to all the disciples and Peter was obviously there. He even had a very specific conversation

with the Lord Jesus. When the Lord asked him three times if he loved Him. The remarkable thing is that Peter is named here separately and before the Lord would have appeared to the twelve. That event is therefore not recorded, but in another place it is stated that it happened, namely in the history of the Emmaus disciples, who were on their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus. In Luke 24:34 it says that they recognised the Lord Jesus and returned.

Luke 24:33–34

And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

He is not called Cephas here, not Peter, but for the occasion he is called Simon. He was therefore indeed the first of the men to have an encounter with the Lord. We know no better than that He first appeared to one or more women, with the result that two men set off for the tomb to check things out.

John 20:3–10

Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

It does not say that they had an encounter with the Lord. Nor was that the case in Luke 24.

Luke 24:12

Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

Then we have the history of the Emmaus disciples. They report to the eleven and say: The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. The event itself is not recorded. Nevertheless, the point is that the Lord appeared first of all to Peter.

Matthew 16:18–19

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Peter was to be the first and to close and open certain things. He was not only the first of the apostles, but also the first to say, Thou art the Christ, and he is therefore also the first to see the Christ after His resurrection, after Jesus had been made both Lord and Christ—which were, incidentally, Peter's own words as the first speaker under the New Covenant on the well-known day of Pentecost.

Paul acknowledges this position of Peter and therefore names him first in the list of witnesses who had seen the Lord after His resurrection.

And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

When the Emmaus disciples told the eleven that they had seen the Lord Jesus, He suddenly stood in their midst and thus appeared to the eleven—although Paul says it was to the twelve.

We also find this account in Mark 16.

Mark 16:14

Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

That was in the upper room, where they had also eaten the Passover meal with the Lord. The event itself is described most fully in the Gospel of John.

John 20:19–23 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

Here not only the twelve were gathered, but also those who were with them. On this occasion there were only ten apostles present, for Judas was naturally absent, while Matthias had not yet been chosen as an apostle. Thomas was also still absent, though he was present a week later.

John 20:24–25

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

John 20:26

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

Afterwards the account repeats itself.

Paul can therefore rightly say that the Lord appeared to the twelve. That makes the twelve specific witnesses of the risen Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:6

After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

An appearance of the Lord to more than five hundred at once. That is quite something. This event is also mentioned by the Evangelists.

John 21:1

After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself.

Not in Jerusalem, but in Galilee, at the lake of Galilee, also called the sea of Tiberias, or the lake of Gennesaret.

Then follows a list of some of the disciples present, after which they go fishing, catch nothing, and the Lord the next morning tells them to cast the net on the other side. They do so and catch 153 large fish. The point is that the Lord and His disciples are here in Galilee. After the catch of fish and the subsequent meal, the Lord has a conversation with Peter, asking him three times if he loves Him.

At His ascension the Lord is again in Jerusalem. He had spoken with the disciples for forty days about the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. The Lord ascended just outside Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives. That was it. That does not alter the fact that the whole company went to Galilee at some point, where at least the events of John 21 took place, including the miraculous catch of fish. You cannot deduce from John 21 that such a large company was present. The other Scripture passages that speak of it are even more difficult.

Matthew 26:31–32

Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

I will go before you into Galilee. The words evidently do not fully sink in, for nothing more is said about it

In Matthew 28 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary are at the tomb and find that the Lord Jesus has risen.

Matthew 28:6–10

He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Matthew 28:16

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

That group therefore went to Galilee—which does not rule out that others went as well. They went to a specific place, to that mountain where the Lord Jesus had directed them.

Matthew 28:17–20

And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Here the account ends, with the meeting of the Lord with His disciples in Galilee. This must also have been the occasion when the Lord appeared to more than five hundred at once.

In Mark 14 we read the same thing.

Mark 14:27–28

And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

Nothing more is said about it here, but in chapter 16 it is referred to again.

Mark 16:6–7

...he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

Afterwards Mark does not mention that this meeting actually took place.

The whole point is that the salvation, the blessings of the risen Christ, did not come to the Jews but to the Galileans—not to the two tribes, but to the ten tribes. The reference to Galilee, where they would meet the Lord, is a picture of that. It was the same when the Lord Jesus had to flee to Egypt with His parents. When they returned to Bethlehem they were warned not to go there, but to Galilee—incidentally with reference to Old Testament Scriptures.

That account means exactly the same: not among the Jewish people, but somewhere else, to the Galilee of the Gentiles. It is not further explained, because it is simply part of the mystery. The things are stated, reference is made to them, but they are not explained at length. It is in fact not necessary, for those matters were announced many times and in many ways in the Old Testament.

Back to 1 Corinthians 15.

The underlying thought is easy to follow. The Lord has risen, and there are many witnesses to it. That makes it a proven historical fact. That so much time has passed since then up to the present day changes nothing about the historical fact. We have no right afterwards to doubt the testimony of so many.

The five hundred who saw Him were afterwards officially His witnesses. Not only Peter and not even only the twelve, but certainly also the seventy and probably these five hundred as well went out to preach the gospel.

Paul says that the majority of those five hundred are still alive, and some have fallen asleep, so you get the impression that he personally knew the majority of these five hundred and had met them over time—otherwise he could not say it on personal authority. You may also assume that those who travelled around preaching the gospel occasionally met one another and sometimes travelled together for a time. We do not know further who these five hundred were, though we find some indications here and there. You naturally do not reach five hundred, but it is easy to imagine that people like the man born blind, the young man of Nain, and the rich young ruler—whom we encounter in the course of the history—responded to the call to gather in Galilee, somewhere on a mountain. The Lord appeared to them there. The location is important in connection with the typology. Nevertheless, it concerns people of flesh and blood who knew the Lord in those days and afterwards became His witnesses—not only among the Jewish people, but throughout the whole world. The gospel was preached throughout the world in those days and bore fruit (Colossians 1:6). If that happened in such a short time, there must have been quite a number of preachers to proclaim the gospel.

God now commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). How many preachers do you need for that? Paul writes to the Colossians about the word that bears fruit throughout the whole world. We find little of the history itself in the Bible. In the book of

Acts you find the account of a few of Paul's missionary journeys, but there must have been many more who worked in the same way as Paul to spread the gospel throughout the world. You should not think too little of that. That Paul was aware of it is understandable, and his remark here also indicates it.

1 Corinthians 15:7

After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

After that conference in Galilee the Lord Jesus appeared to a certain James. As far as is known there are three Jameses. At the time Paul writes this, one of them had already died—namely James the brother of John, one of the sons of Zebedee. His martyrdom is described in Acts 12:1–2. It is almost certain that Paul means James the Lord's brother. We know that James at least from Acts 15, from the so-called apostolic council in Jerusalem, where he acted as chairman. He is so identified with the church in Jerusalem that in Galatians 2 it speaks of certain coming from James, meaning some had come from Jerusalem. That gives James a prominent position in the church at Jerusalem. It is also the same James to whom we owe an epistle.

James is somewhat controversial in biblical history. There were several who were inclined to hold fast to Jewish tradition. It cost them a great deal to let go of those teachings. Christianity is simply not Jewish. Indeed, Judaism officially rejected the Messiah and thereby distanced itself from Christ and Christianity. It was difficult for those who were Jewish and came to faith to let go of the Jewish law. With Paul that happened rather drastically. He was a Jew through and through. From his youth he had been brought up in his father's traditions and was more zealous than his contemporaries. But he was seized on the way and God held a mirror before him in which it was shown that the way of Judaism led to enmity against Christ. He clearly had to distance himself immediately from his Jewish background. In Philippians he says he counted it all loss and dung to win Christ.

Peter also had difficulty with it. We know the story of Peter going to Cornelius, to a Gentile household. It did not come easily and caused quite a stir. He even apologised for it several times later, which shows that he did have some trouble with it. When he was later in Antioch and some came from James, he placed himself under the Jewish law again for the occasion. Paul rebuked him sharply about it.

Mark, the writer of the Gospel of Mark, also had difficulty with it. If you place all the Scripture passages about him side by side, you come to exactly the same conclusion. He too had trouble letting go of Jewish traditions. This probably applied even to his uncle Barnabas, though it is not so obvious with him. It remains a problematic matter, and even in our days it is still problematic. That is also why we have the term Messianic Jew. If they are called that, you know whose Name they evidently prefer not to speak. They also try to keep the Jewish customs as much as possible. Yet it should not be so difficult. You come to conversion and count the things from which you came as loss and dung and turn to Christ. That it is difficult from one day to the next will certainly be so, but they can surely learn.

The same applies to present-day believers: they often have difficulty letting go of the legalistic principles under which they have lived. Holding on to those things comes at the cost of knowing the glory of Christ. As long as you hold to the law, you are blinded by the New Covenant and therefore see nothing of it. That was demonstrated to Paul on the way to Damascus.

He was confronted with the Lord and was struck blind on the spot. Blinded by the glory of that light. One of the problems that so few people have any notion of the glory of the New Covenant and of New Testament truth in general is caused by a legalistic way of life. People are focused on ethics, on the outward. Sometimes it is law and sometimes good works. All those things directed towards the outward form a hindrance to seeing spiritual things. That is why there is so little room for spiritual things. Those two things do not tolerate each other either.

1 Corinthians 15:8

And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.
Paul too has seen the Lord Jesus Christ.
Last of all = after that it stopped.

1 Corinthians 15:9

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
Paul = the hindered one. The one who is held back and thereby kept small. He had persecuted the church of God. You cannot say that of the other apostles, but you can also hardly say of them that they were worthy to be called an apostle. That is not the point at all, for they were simply selected and appointed by the Lord Jesus. They were not worthy, but they were so by the grace of God. Just like Paul, for that is what the next verse says. He could not help it either. It was simply grace.
Back for a moment to verse 8.

And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

This refers naturally first of all to the account in Acts 9, to the conversion of Saul.

Acts 9:3–5

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Moses said the same thing immediately: Who art thou; what is thy name? Dost thou belong to us, or dost thou belong to the adversary?

Whether he actually saw the Lord on that occasion is not really stated. It says that he was blinded and that he heard a voice.

In Acts 18 Paul is in Corinth, where there was considerable opposition.

Acts 18:9–10

Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

It was in a vision. He must have seen something, in whatever way.

1 Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

In Acts 26 Paul is in custody in Caesarea before Agrippa and tells him his conversion story.

Acts 26:14–16

And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

A minister and a witness of the things which thou hast seen presupposes that he saw the Lord in Damascus. In Acts 22 there is an even more interesting statement, when Paul has just been arrested in Jerusalem and addresses the Jewish people from the steps leading up to the fortress of Antonia, from a higher position than the Jews on the lower temple court.

From that position he gives his testimony. Paul tells the story in great detail. He had just been converted in Damascus and after many days went to Jerusalem, where he made contact with the apostles, which went with difficulty. He tried to preach the gospel among the Jews there, which also went with difficulty. Eventually we read that he set off for home, to Tarsus. From there he was fetched years later by Joseph, surnamed Barnabas, with whom he went on missionary journeys.

He is in Jerusalem and gets no foothold there—not with the Christians, nor with the Jews. He mentions that event, but we do not find it in Acts 9, only here.

Acts 22:17–21

And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

That was said to him in Jerusalem and led to him going back to Tarsus. He had some things to do at home first. That has to do with the fact that during his stay in Damascus he had made a journey to Sinai in Arabia and had been caught up there into the paradise of God and seen unspeakable things. Then he returned to Damascus. After many days had passed he thought he had something to tell them in Jerusalem and so went there, but they would have none of him. Then he went home and probably did his homework again and studied the Old Testament in the light of the New. When he was more or less finished with that, Barnabas appeared and took him on missionary journeys. In any case, the Lord appeared to him in some way. Not quite in the same way as the Lord appeared to the disciples, but for Paul it was clear enough.

Later he also appeals to it. He says: I am an apostle, for I was not only sent by the Lord, but I have also seen Him myself. The Corinthians disputed his apostleship and thus his position, but he appeals to the fact that he is indeed a witness of the risen Christ. That is what he says here, but moreover that he considers himself as one born out of due time.

And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

One born out of due time, but in combination with last of all you would think he was the youngest. That is not what the expression means. It means even the opposite, namely one born too early.

That is important, for that does not fit in the sequence. He rose on the third day, was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; then of more than five hundred brethren at once, then of James, and last of all he was also seen of me as of one born prematurely. The translators have rendered it differently, probably because they could not follow it. Ectroma = born prematurely, but it also refers to abortion. He was forcibly born, too early. How then was Paul born too early? By that word he does not place himself at the end of the series, for he had already done that with last of all. He places himself as it were at the front. He was born too early in the sense that Saul of Tarsus, even at his conversion in Acts 9, is a picture of the Jewish people and thereby of the law as such. His conversion is a model for the future conversion of the Jewish people. You can only understand that if you know how that will happen. In the future the Jewish people will be confronted with the great tribulation and the preaching of the gospel. That leads them to do what the Old Testament says. They will then call upon the name of the Lord. When they do that, the Lord will actually appear. That results in them seeing Him and seeing certain marks and asking what they are.

They will then call upon the Name that in Judaism is forbidden to pronounce, because it is too holy to invoke. But well, in the future they will one day call upon His Name and then the Lord will set His feet on the Mount of Olives and on that occasion they will ask Him what those marks in His hands are. Then it will become clear who He is. That He is Jesus, whom they persecute. Only then do they come to faith, in the same way that Thomas came to faith a week after the other apostles had seen Him. The conversion of Thomas is a model for the conversion of the Jewish people at the end of the seventieth week of Daniel, when they will yet see the Lord Jesus and as a people officially come to faith, because they recognise His form. Then it appears that the Lord Jesus is none other than Jehovah. That God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ.

The conversion of Saul from Judaism is therefore also a picture of the future conversion of the Jewish people out of Judaism. That is why Paul's conversion is not a model conversion for us in our dispensation.

Moreover, it was not only his conversion on the way to Damascus; it was at the same time also his calling. That makes his conversion an exceptional situation. We have no right to say that you must wait until the Lord seizes you. That is not so. You certainly cannot refer to Paul's conversion for the occasion.

Because his conversion is a picture of the future conversion of the Jewish people, he can say that he is one born out of due time.

Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus appeared to him; albeit last of the apostles, but the first and the last are always important. The first has the primacy. Peter was the first of the apostles. That does not alter the fact that Paul as last of the apostles immediately also has the last word. He is the last authority. He recounts in Galatians 1 how it went. There he speaks again of his conversion.

Galatians 1:13-17

For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

Galatians 1:18-19

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. The Lord had separated him from his mother's womb. That does not alter the fact that the Lord allowed Saul to grow up in Judaism and at the feet of Gamaliel and simply waited until a certain time and then intervened and called him. That makes Paul a special figure, for he did not come to faith through the preaching of the apostles, other disciples, or Christians. Indeed, it is to be feared that he had certainly taken note of that preaching, for why else would he have persecuted them? That preaching had at any rate not convinced him. If there had been any reason for it, then that reason must have been that he found too little basis in the Old Testament in the preaching of the apostles. You can say that the Lord Jesus is the promised Messiah, but that must then be demonstrated from the Old Testament. Merely mentioning a Scripture passage here and there is not sufficient for that, especially since such passages are often quoted out of context. That must have been very difficult for someone versed in the Scriptures. Heavier artillery was needed for that. In any case, Paul was not convinced by it. He saw in Christianity an enemy of Judaism and thereby an enemy of the Lord Himself. He saw that wrongly, of course, but evidently the preaching of the apostles had not made sufficient impression on him. After his conversion he therefore did not immediately confer with flesh and blood. Probably because he knew what those people preached and he did not agree with it. They evidently had nothing to say to him. At least nothing convincing enough for him. Paul was a learned man, not just anyone. With him you had to come with heavier artillery than with preaching in an average evangelistic meeting. Some people you have to seize and drag along and so bring to the Lord. With other people that does not work; they must be convinced from the Scriptures. Paul therefore did not confer with flesh and blood and did not go back to Jerusalem, to the apostles. He did go there, but before that he first went to Arabia and back to Damascus. He went to Sinai, just like Moses in his time and like Elijah and probably like the Lord Jesus. That it was Sinai seems clear. In the first place because at least Moses and Elijah had also been there and because he mentions that mountain in Galatians 4 as well. He climbed Sinai like Moses and saw patterns there, just like Moses. To Moses it was said: See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. Probably Paul was told: See that thou speak all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. Then he came to the Corinthians and says he regrets that they forbid him to speak in that way. For he had seen unspeakable things that it was not lawful for him to utter. Because of the Corinthians. Paul did not preach merely what had been preached to him, but what he had received from God Himself. That is what he says too.

Galatians 1:10-12

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

That is the dilemma of every speaker. Whom does he do it for; to please men or God?

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That Paul also saw the Lord Jesus Christ last of all, as one born out of due time, is evidently not meant merely in the literal sense, but also figuratively. The Lord made Himself known to him and initiated him into New Testament truth. It also seems that the Lord told him he should come and visit Him on Sinai. If he had problems with the law, then he should go and see where it came from. Come and see what the law is a picture of—namely, that the law is a shadow of good things to come. See those good things to come that Moses saw when he set up the tabernacle as a copy of what he had seen on the mountain. The Lord now shows it to Saul. What exactly he saw we do not know, for it is not further described, except that it was New Testament truth. Apparently it was impressive enough for him to go back and read the Old Testament in the light of the New. It seems he simply studied the Scriptures anew in Tarsus. He already possessed a great deal of knowledge of those Scriptures anyway. That is also evident from his preaching. What is characteristic of what he writes in his epistles is that whatever he asserts, he bases it on Old Testament statements. Paul did not preach anything new; in everything he says he relies on Old Testament statements. He reread and restudied those Scriptures in the light of what the Lord had revealed to him. No other human being came between them after that. Even his upbringing at the feet of Gamaliel—where he must have been initiated into the Talmud, but certainly also into the Tanakh, the Old Testament—must have served him well in his study of the Bible after his conversion. Now with the Light added, which had appeared to him, of which the light on the road to Damascus was naturally a picture.

This makes Paul the apostle par excellence. More so than someone like Peter, of whom we see that he had to learn certain things along the way. Read, for example, Galatians 2. Where the other apostles had problems with the transition, it was different for Paul. From one moment to the next he lost the old, and then the new was revealed to him. The problem he then had was that he could not say the Lord had revealed this to him and the Lord had revealed that to him. That would have no point, for whatever truth it is and whatever truth it concerns, it must be in accordance with the Old Testament Scriptures. New Testament or church truth does not stand on its own, but is the fulfilment of what was promised in the Old Testament.

Although Paul was taught by the revelation of Jesus Christ, he does not teach us these things on the basis of that authority, but on the basis of what the Scriptures say. Far more than all the Scripture references under the texts might lead us to suspect. The better one knows the Old Testament, the more one will recognise that.

In any case, Paul does not appeal to the apostles, but to the Lord who showed it to him. In practice, however, he appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures. That makes Paul—who was the last among the apostles and also the least, in the sense of the most unworthy, because he persecuted the church—yet the most important apostle as regards doctrinal truth. By far the majority of the epistles are also from Paul's hand, and insofar as others also wrote epistles, they are all short notes. When you weigh that up, you must immediately conclude that Paul is the most important messenger of New Testament truth. He has the last word, which insinuates he teaches different things from the other apostles, but that he teaches far more than the others and also substantiates it better with Scripture references. He is the teacher par excellence, and

he also behaves that way towards the Corinthians, who incidentally have great problems with it. His long stay under Judaism, however, made him immune to that. If someone later ever told him how useful it is to have the law, or the ten commandments, he could immediately come with his own testimony and say that he lived under it and that nothing came of him under the law. He was blind and an enemy of the gospel, an enemy of Christ, who persecuted the Lord. He did so from the thought that it was so useful to live under the law. That is why he often recounts his history and also acts very rigorously against those who think they must preach the law. The law is holy, just, and good, but it is an introduction to a better hope, by which we draw near to God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

You wonder how much respect Paul actually has for the other apostles. He leaves them in their value, but from statements like this you can conclude that Saul of Tarsus at the time made himself acquainted with their preaching and was not convinced by it. Better substantiation was needed for that. That also makes him eminently suited to preach the gospel to his brethren according to the flesh, with whom he nevertheless had a special bond all his life. He had love for them and saw it as the highest fulfilment of his ministry to preach the gospel precisely to the Jews, however difficult that was. The strong emphasis Paul places on the grace of God is easy to explain. He devoted a large part of his life to living under the law and also considered himself a minister of the law, which he thought was in accordance with God's will. This, however, led to him persecuting the church of God and moreover the Lord Himself. The Lord Jesus said to him in Damascus: I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. He is conscious of the grace of God, for otherwise he would not have been an apostle at all. The Lord called him precisely not only to be saved or something like that, but to reveal the manifold wisdom of God, or, as he says in Galatians 1, to reveal the Son of God. Moreover he says: And his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Paul may excel in modesty in verse 9, but then he says his grace was not in vain, for look at the result. This automatically means that he is an example in his ministry for others who stand in such a ministry—not in that of apostle or prophet, but in the ministry of the Word. Moreover, he is actually an example for the whole church, for he says in quite a few places that we should all be his followers, as he is of Christ.

Moreover, you cannot help but smile a little when he says he laboured more abundantly than they all, for what do we really know about all of them? Is he speaking of the twelve, the seventy, or the five hundred? We know a very little about Peter, because a few things about him are written in the first few chapters of Acts, but that is where it ends. John is mentioned once or twice in those chapters, but no more. Of the apostle James it is only recorded that he was beheaded. Beyond that we know nothing of him.

Paul evidently did know about it, otherwise he could not have said this. That is actually already sufficient. It means at any rate that we do not have just two apostles, namely Peter and Paul, but that they all preached the gospel—although Paul did more work and was evidently aware of it. On occasion he even says that the gospel was preached throughout the whole world and bore fruit throughout the whole world (Colossians 1:6). To be able to say that, he must have known something about it. They all laboured, although in Acts we have only a little about Peter. When Paul appeared on the scene,

Peter disappeared from the pages of the Bible. Three of his missionary journeys are described. Along the way we are also told that a great deal is not told. When Paul lists where he has all been, we do not find the accounts of those in the Bible. Those accounts that are written down have far greater depth than what we learn about them outside the Bible. There is a great deal behind it. That is so throughout the whole Bible and thus also in the New Testament accounts. It is also expressed in this exposition. Insofar as biblical truth has been handed down to us in writing, a large part of New Testament truth has been revealed to us through the apostle Paul. That makes him the greatest anyway. His influence is also the greatest.

Later, at the end of the first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul speaks of the power of God's grace that worked in him. The Lord had said to him: My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. If you add those two sentences together, you get that the power of God's grace is more than sufficient for Paul, who in himself is weak. That statement is naturally also directed to those who think the power of God lies in precepts and rules. That is not so, for the great power that works in believers is the power of God's grace. That grace is at any rate stronger than the law, but also stronger than death. Paul says that grace of God is with him and motivates him.

1 Corinthians 15:11

Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. This is one of the Scripture passages where it is stated in black and white that the preaching of the apostles is not different from the preaching of the apostle Paul. Insofar as people decide there is nevertheless a difference, that is caused by the fact that we know far more about Paul's preaching than, for example, about the content of the preaching of Simon the Zealot. There is nothing about that in the Bible. We know a little more about Peter, because he wrote two short letters. That is not meant disparagingly, but they are only two short letters. From Paul we have thirteen letters, not even counting Hebrews. That is quite a lot compared with Peter. If you place those letters side by side, you naturally quickly say that Paul teaches quite different things from Peter. That is not due to different preaching, but Paul has learned far more things than the other apostles. Much of what Paul teaches simply does not come up in the other letters. If you have to go by what they wrote to find out what they believed and preached, then that simply does not work. You can better do the reverse and establish that everything the apostles wrote and handed down to us in writing fully corresponds with what Paul wrote. He simply wrote far more than the other apostles.

Paul says here at any rate that both he and the others preach in the same way—namely that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, likewise according to the scriptures. All the apostles preached that there is eternal life in the risen Saviour. That is what it comes down to in practice. You may assume this also applies to the last part of this chapter, about the rapture of the church. Peter refers us at the end of his second epistle to Paul and says of him that he wrote in all his epistles about exactly the same theme as Peter himself.

2 Peter 3:15–16

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some

things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

The longsuffering of the Lord is demonstrated in that the second coming of Christ, in which He will judge, has still not taken place. He does not delay that promise of His coming (as some count slackness), but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Peter adds that Paul goes deeper into the things than he himself does, for he finds some things Paul writes hard to understand. That is a fine personal testimony from Peter that he too found some things difficult. In any case, Peter fully agrees with all of Paul's epistles. So we preach, and so ye believed. This is the preaching you once accepted.

1 Corinthians 15:12 -13

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

Paul allows no exceptions. Resurrection of the dead is resurrection of dead people. If there is no resurrection of dead people, then Christ is not risen either. The idea that Jesus Christ is someone else, or of a completely different nature from other people, plays no role here at all. In the minds of some people it does, but that is wrongly so. The Lord became man and came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He came moreover to die. That also happened. Then He rose, and thus there is evidently such a thing as resurrection of the dead. That is therefore the preaching.

By resurrection here is not meant merely regeneration—what people also call spiritual resurrection—for Paul in this chapter is speaking about bodily resurrection. These are difficult concepts, because this fundamental truth has been reduced to widespread religious and philosophical notions. People have invented the idea that man is naturally immortal. Man is a soul, and the soul is immortal. At best, man has a soul and that soul is immortal. Just ask any random person who claims to be a Christian. They all say they believe the soul is immortal.

When people speak about what happens after death, they say that death is a kind of transition to the afterlife. You have to go through the door, cross the threshold, pass through the tunnel—and depending on how much opinion one has about it, one also gets visions of it. Usually on the deathbed, or on the operating table. People call those near-death experiences. Once you are through the tunnel, you are in the afterlife. We Christians call that heaven; others call it nirvana (a ridiculous term, because it presupposes nothingness); still others the Elysian fields, or the eternal hunting grounds. For Christians it applies that if you have not tried hard enough, you end up a few floors lower, in hell.

That may all be so, but resurrection is something quite different. It is not the same as a Christian who has always tried hard, always faithfully gone to church, neatly learned his psalm verses, and dies—after which he passes through the tunnel and ends up somewhere he calls heaven. That is human philosophy, or as the Bible calls it, old wives' fables. They are cleverly devised fables. People thought it up nicely, so as not to leave man entirely to his fate. If we say that life is vain, they still have the idea that something comes afterwards. Usually, outside of Christianity, it is added that it will all turn out well in the end—although this is increasingly taught in Christianity too, so that in the end we all go to heaven. That is not so, for heaven is never the afterlife. Heaven is

the above, and it has always been there. That is the heaven of old. If you do not mean that heaven, then it is the starry heaven or the heaven of the birds. Those are the two heavens that form part of the created world. But when people speak of the afterlife, they generally do not mean one of these two heavens. So it must be the heaven of heavens. Of that the Bible says it is not the afterlife, but was the before-life and is now the above-life and will be so. The afterlife, according to the Bible, is a new creation that God will make: new heavens—of the little birds and the stars—and a new earth. The old creation will pass away, and no place is found for it any more, but a new creation comes in its place.

As far as believers throughout history are concerned, they have indeed been promised an afterlife, but that does not mean heaven, but the new earth. The exception to this is the church of the firstborn. All believers from the church, beginning with Christ Himself—who is the Firstborn of the new creation—and then all who are Christ's, up to the second coming of Christ, are destined as firstfruits for God and thus for heaven. They are also promoted to heaven for that purpose. That is not the afterlife. That does not alter the fact that we as believers will indeed be in heaven hereafter. God has not promised to make that heaven, for it has always been there.

If you leave aside this exceptional position of Christ and the church as a heavenly people, then nowhere in the Bible can you find that the afterlife would be heaven.

Hereafter comes a new creation, new heavens, and a new earth. Believers are promised a new earth. Insofar as they are not yet there—because it does not yet exist and they are still in what the Old Testament calls Sheol and the New Testament Hades—that is a kind of in-between state. They are in the realm of the dead, for that is the translation of both words, and they wait there, so that they without us should not be made perfect

Hebrews 11:40

God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

All these (the believers from the Old Testament) have not obtained the promise. That means they did obtain the promise, but not its fulfilment. Not yet, at any rate. God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. We are made perfect first, and then they afterwards. In short, first the church and then the Old Testament believers. If the dead are raised, then that will happen on the proverbial Last Day from Revelation 20. Then everyone will rise and stand before God to be judged. Only there lies the switch to salvation or to destruction. Those who are not written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. Those who are written in the book of life will end up on the new earth.

People have attached wrong notions to biblical terms, or they have hung pagan philosophy or mythology onto biblical expressions. As a result, the real meaning of the biblical expressions has been lost. For the moment this is not about the church in our days, but about what the rule is. That rule is that when someone dies, he goes to the realm of the dead. According to the Bible that is the place where the dead are kept, for it is indeed not yet finished for them. With death everything is finished, but not with the first death. That is only so with the second death. At the first death one disappears to the realm of the dead, and then it is waiting for the day of judgement. That is not there at the moment you die, but on the Last Day.

In our dispensation it is just a little different. On the one hand it is the same, for when unbelievers die, they too go to the realm of the dead and wait there until the Last Day.

For believers it is different. They have already been raised in a spiritual sense and have already been officially seated with Christ in heaven. When a believer is delivered from his earthly body, he is delivered from what binds him to the earth. This does not mean he goes to heaven, but that he leaves the earth here. He was already in heaven and will therefore remain there. That is why you also nowhere read in the Bible that a believer, when he has died, goes to heaven. We have been seated with Christ in heaven. We are a church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. That is the exceptional position of the firstborn. If we were not firstborn, we would have nothing to seek in heaven.

What this chapter in 1 Corinthians 15 is about is not what happens when a person dies and what comes after that, but when a person dies, how it is in the resurrection. That does not come immediately afterwards, but later. There are dates for that, which God develops, unrolls, and unfolds in His plan of salvation.

The Lord Jesus Christ has had part in that resurrection as the First, in such a way that death no longer has dominion over Him. He was raised as the First—not back into the old life, but in newness of life (Romans 6:4):

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

God raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. And that He raised Him and death no longer has dominion over Him is already stated in the Old Testament: I will give you the sure mercies of David (Isaiah 55:3). Christ is the Son of David. His mercies are sure, they endure, with the result that death no longer has dominion over Him.

Acts 13:34

And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

Those who are faithful = those who remain steadfast.

If you wonder how it can be that the Corinthians did believe in the Gospel, yet suddenly seem not to believe in a resurrection, it is probably because they did believe that the Lord lives in some way or other, but not in a bodily resurrection of the Lord. That is precisely what Nico ter Linden believes. Of course he believes in a resurrection, but not a bodily one. He believes that the Lord lives on in some manner, even if only in our thoughts, or perhaps as some cosmic force working in the cosmos. With such vague ideas you can fit in with a great many religions.

The Bible teaches a bodily resurrection. Just as bodily as that new creation will appear. The old does pass away and no place is found for it any more, yet a new creation certainly comes forth from it. The body goes into the grave, and when the resurrection has taken place, the grave is empty. Was the body of the Lord Jesus the same after His resurrection? He still had His scars, and the body in the grave was gone. Although it concerns the same body, it has nevertheless become a different body. The new has characteristics of the old, yet it is something different. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. The new comes forth from the old. The finest example to make clear how this works is that of the caterpillar and the butterfly. First you have a caterpillar. It spins itself a cocoon and becomes a pupa. After a time the pupa opens again and out comes a completely different creature. Is it the same creature? Yes and no. If there had been no caterpillar, there would never have been that butterfly. The

butterfly comes forth from the caterpillar. How it works? No idea. That is precisely what resurrection is. It is astonishingly difficult to believe, yet it happens.

The body that rises is nevertheless different from what died. What rises is different from what was sown, and yet it is the same. What falls into the earth and dies nevertheless bears fruit. Thus the resurrection body comes forth from the old, which then no longer exists. This applies to the whole creation. The new comes forth from the old. What that will be like we do not know. It is therefore a wonder. But indeed, the whole of nature is full of wonders.

So it is not all spiritual and intangible. Not that someone lives on in our thoughts and that we will never forget him. Someone does not live on in our thoughts. We think of someone who is no longer here. It has become a fixed expression, but of course there is nothing in it. It passes away. As far as this old world is concerned, that is definitive—unless from this old world something new can still be brought forth. According to physics that cannot happen, but according to the Bible it can. The world is full of it. Every process of reproduction is for the most part a demonstration of resurrection from death. From what has decayed or died, new life comes forth.

The problem with the Corinthians will surely not have been that they did not believe in an afterlife, but that they did not believe in a literal bodily resurrection. It is not for nothing that one of the traditional Christian creeds states: I believe in the resurrection of the flesh. Then you know exactly what it is about—namely a bodily resurrection. Other religions do not have that. Other religions know only a kind of shadowy world. That people in wide circles expect that after death there is still something is because they are aware that life here is disappointing in every respect, or in many respects. When you are young you are filled with high expectations. Then gradually it turns out that it was all unjustified. Moreover, you yourself largely do not have it in hand. It all ends in death anyway. Then you live on for a while in the thoughts of a few people, and then you have about had it.

One of the most important points in the matter is that the whole world is full of injustice. Right cannot be found here, and people then decide that it must come hereafter. They say that the world is in balance (something they like to teach). It is just one great mechanism, with all sorts of cogs interlocking. It is a cosmic whole in which everyone takes their place. If someone deviates, then another deviates in the opposite direction, so that balance is nevertheless maintained. Yin and yang play a large role in that. It is a fine philosophy, but it is not true. The world is a corrupt and perishing world, out of joint. It is a sinful world. The Bible can shout that as loudly as possible, but the world pays no heed.

People establish that there is also so much injustice in the life of the individual. That cannot be. Even within that smaller whole of an individual, that balance must be restored. Balance must exist. Among Muslims it is the case that they may sin, but then a number of good deeds must stand opposite to it. Thus balance is restored. When people establish that in this life right is not found, cannot be found, and cannot be done, then apparently something is missing in our worldview. For it must be in balance. For that purpose people have invented the afterlife. If you were a rogue here and escaped your punishment, then you will not escape your punishment in the afterlife. If you were a very good person here and did not receive your reward for it here, then you will receive it in the afterlife after all, and so everything comes right in the end. People have invented the afterlife to make everything come right after all. In the more or less Christian

tradition that afterlife is heaven; there everything will come right by and by. For that purpose they have invented that God Himself made Satan. Those two keep each other in balance. They let the devil exist as part and counterpart of God. God Himself must of course also be in balance. In the course of history that balance fluctuates a bit, but in the end it will all come right. For God Himself created evil, the Bible says. The point is only that in this connection you should not quote such a verse, for it means something quite different from what people generally make of it. That way you can misuse the whole Bible.

People expect an afterlife to compensate for the shortcomings of this life. Biblical truth is quite different. Insofar as there is an afterlife, it is only intended for those faithful to the truth, for those who have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Word that God has revealed. That afterlife exists only for those who had love of the truth to be saved. They also receive part in the truth. That truth is not that there is still something after death, but they receive part in a new creation promised by God and which will be revealed at the appointed time. On the way there God still has much to do. For today that is the calling of the church. It is not destined for the afterlife, but for a heavenly position. For in heaven a vacuum will arise when the devil and his staff are cast out from it. That vacuum will be compensated by Christ and the church. Where the devil and his angels now govern the world, in the future Christ and the church will be at the helm. Moreover, He is also the Owner. He is the Son over His own house (Hebrews 3:6). The resurrection of the dead is therefore indeed meant literally. If there were no such thing, then Christ is not raised either. And if Christ is not raised, then preaching is empty. In other words, the resurrection of Christ is the essence of the Gospel.

Insofar as it is taught that God will make new heavens and a new earth, that is grounded in the resurrection of Christ.

From verse 23 onwards it is set forth that in connection with the resurrection there is an order, and thus a rank order. It is not all at once, but it proceeds in stages. From the order a rank order also emerges. First come, first served. That one receives the birthright. The first is the highest and the last is the lowest. That is a biblical principle. The new creation begins with the resurrection of Christ. So then whoever is in Christ is a new creature. That is what we are too. Only as regards our body—that is our house, our tabernacle—it has not yet been renewed. We must still be delivered from it and set free from it. That does not alter the fact that we in Christ have already become a new creation, for

2 Corinthians 5:17 (

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

From the context it is clear that this concerns the present. It is already so now.

Nevertheless, more will follow in the future. But if Christ is not raised, then there is nothing further. Then preaching is vain, then faith is also vain. The question is how many people care about that, for there are so many people who believe something, but it does not matter to them whether it is true or not.

Faith and truth are for the vast majority of people two completely different things, and not only that. For many they are two opposite things. Truth they know for certain, and everything else they believe. If someone says it cannot be true, they agree and say that is why it is called faith.

A Roman Catholic priest once said on the radio about the Shroud of Turin that the church would never admit that the shroud is indeed genuine, for then it would be certainty, and that is not the intention, because it is about faith. For him truth and faith are two completely different things.

That is the case with a great many people. Whether their faith is vain or not does not keep them awake. You can believe something, but if it is not true, what are you doing? If you do not believe in the resurrection of Christ, then preaching is vain, but your faith also. If there is no resurrection from the dead, then whatever you believe is utterly meaningless. Nowadays that does not even stand out any more, for the whole world is full of vain preaching, whether on religious ground or not. There are always whole tribes of people who follow such preaching. You can present yourself as a revealed deity as an eel farmer, and promptly you still get followers too.

1 Corinthians 15:15

Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

It is not only vain preaching, but also false.

Paul uses the word witnesses here; that can only be if he has actually seen the risen Christ. Otherwise you cannot witness. If we were to preach that Christ is risen and it is not so, then we are false witnesses. False witnesses of God, to be precise. That is a very serious matter. You cannot trifle with the Word of God with impunity. You also cannot use the Word of God with impunity to substantiate your own theories. You will one day stand before the Author. Then it proves not to be without obligation. Paul hammers it home.

1 Corinthians 15:16 -18

For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

If they are literally fallen asleep in Christ and Christ is not raised, then those who are in Christ are also not raised. Then there is no benefit in having fallen asleep in Christ.

Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures (verse 3), but if Christ is not raised, ye are yet in your sins. However true it is that He died for our sins, we are not delivered from them if He is not raised from the dead. You must understand that death and corruption in general are not merely the consequence of sin(s), but that death is sin. Then it goes wrong. Then it does not achieve its purpose. That is precisely what death is. Hence sin and death are regarded as synonyms in the Bible. Fundamentally they are the same thing. We can agree among ourselves to understand sins as things on a moral level and death as the same but on a physical level. But those are things we have invented, because we want to put everything into boxes. Death and sin are one and the same concept, expressed in everything.

Even if you limit it and say that if He died for our sins, we have received forgiveness of sins, that is fine, for then you can die peacefully, without leaving a debt behind. But what good is that? You could better advise people to leave debts behind. Then at least they can enjoy life a bit here. It may not be very kind to the one to whom you owe the debt, but if you speak of sins in general, to whom do you owe those debts? To God, surely? But you simply die and that is it. And if you have received forgiveness of sins and you die,

then what? That makes no difference anyway. The last is perhaps a bit neater than the first, but who cares when you die? You gain nothing from forgiveness of sins if you have not also received new life. If you have no more sins, you still live under the judgement on this world, which holds the truth in unrighteousness. You walk in darkness and know nothing.

People have reasoned away the circumstances and consequences of the resurrection of Christ and exchanged them for the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, to which they hang everything. But it is not enough that Jesus died.

2 Corinthians 5:15

And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Are you then saved? No, then you are dead. Are your sins forgiven? Yes, but you are dead. The sins of the world were borne away on the tree—not only those of believers. He died for us when we were still sinners, when we were still unrighteous, when we were still criminals, when we were still enemies. It was for everyone. In circles of universal reconciliation they teach that this is the basis for the salvation of all. One died for all, did He not, and He died for our sins? Are we not saved because He bore our sins on the cross? Do we not believe that? Well, we do not. He did indeed die for all people, but they are not thereby saved. Salvation does not mean that you live until your death under forgiveness of sins. You gain nothing by that. Moreover, you would only abuse it.

Salvation consists in yet receiving incorruptible life. For that purpose something first had to be settled. For that purpose the debt of sins first had to be taken away. Well, the Lord Jesus took care of that, for everyone, but with that you are not yet delivered. For that you must be regenerated. That is not on the basis of the death or dying of the Lord Jesus, but on the basis of His resurrection. He lives! Yet He does not live for all, but only for those who believe.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

That does not concern His suffering and death, but His resurrection and ascension. The Son of God is officially the Raised from the dead, whom God has set at His own right hand.

The statement in John 3:16 does not stand alone, but is an explanation of the situation in Numbers 21. Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. So must the Son of man also be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The lifted-up serpent is a picture of the lifted-up Son of man, who in the second instance is called the Son of God. That He became in His resurrection. His crucifixion was His humiliation. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also highly exalted Him, for just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up. Whosoever looks to Him, as to the serpent lifted up in the wilderness, shall have eternal life. He was delivered for our offences and raised for our justification (Romans 4:25):

Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. We are only righteous on the basis of the resurrection of Christ, for if Christ is not raised, we are dead.

On the basis of His resurrection we too are raised. Since then we are children of God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ in the heavenlies; righteous, holy, and redeemed in Christ, who has become unto us wisdom from God.

Without resurrection your sins may be taken away and forgiven by God, but it matters so little. It does not change our lives further. We still live here under the influence and dominion of sin. Then there is nothing else. Insofar as we are delivered from the dominion of sin, that is because we are regenerated and since then a power works in us stronger than that of sin and corruption. The life of Christ works in us, and that is true deliverance and salvation.

If He is not raised, then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. You are only perished when you have died. As long as someone lives, he is still there, and when he has died, he is perished. As long as there is life, there is hope. As long as we live here, we have the opportunity to yet come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we die before we come to faith, then it is over. That would apply to believers and unbelievers alike if Christ is not raised. Then life simply ends at death.

1 Corinthians 15:19

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. We are in the process of hoping. That is an active hope. But if we only hope in Him in this life, then we may be busy, but nevertheless we are of all men most miserable. Our hope has everything to do with the resurrection. Why then are we more miserable than all other men, who do not hope in Christ at all? If you are going to place your hope on something in this life, then do not place it on Christ, for He certainly does not help you. Other people may have placed their hope on other things, for without hope there is no life. They, for example, found a political party for a better future. They hope in that. Or you invest, in the hope of making a nice profit from it. But anything better than placing your hope on Christ. You really should not think that the Lord gives us hope for this life. The Preacher asks why you think life goes so up and down. That if there is an upward trend, a downward trend naturally follows. After sunshine always comes rain again. Why? So that man should not place his hope on the future here on earth. For it may well be that things get better, but then they get worse again. It may well be that the earth warms up, but if it warms up, it also cools down again. It goes up and down. Nothing to worry about. There is no hope here anyway. If you wait for the Lord to help you in this life, you can wait a long time, for He has no interest in that at all. He does nothing. He wants to give new life, springing from His resurrection. With that life He wants to bless us with every spiritual blessing in Christ in the heavenlies. The hope we have is not for this life here, for as regards our life here as children of God, we are here in training. We are being brought up and hope that the Lord continues that as long as we are in the flesh. Our real hope, however, is that we look for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Our real hope is the change of our body. Our hope is that we shall be glorified with Christ and revealed with Him in glory. Only then lies the goal of our salvation. Everything the Lord does to us, in us, and through us in this life relates to that future. If it has no relation to that, then it is not He who does it. It says in the Bible that if there is ever a time when the Lord does not look upon man, it is in our days. If you think the Lord is there to help you here, He has not the slightest interest in that. You can come to Him in faith and receive new life from Him. Then you are

regenerated through the resurrection of Christ. Then you are quickened with Him and seated with Him in heaven. Then He does a work in you in preparation for your future. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, thanks to verse 51. Our hope is set on the new creation. He would do something about that, and we already have part in it in the meantime.

1 Corinthians 15:20

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

Christ is risen from the dead, and thereby He has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

The word firstfruits is not the same as first. He is indeed the First who is raised, in such a way that He dies no more. But that is not what it says here.

Firstfruits in the Bible is what we fully call the first fruits of the harvest. Nowadays the first fruits of the harvest interest us not at all, but in the Bible it is an important matter. The first fruits of the harvest were destined for the Lord. They had to be delivered to the priests. Later, when the temple existed, they had to be delivered to the temple. There were even special store chambers for that, in which those firstfruits might be stored. When it concerns the first fruits of the harvest, that is called firstfruits in the KJV. That this word is used for that has its reasons, for usually, when it concerns first fruits destined for the Lord, we find in the KJV another word, namely firstbirth, firstborn, firstborn ones, and sometimes, when it suits, birthright. But you cannot get away with firstbirth when it concerns the first part of the harvest. Harvest is not born, and so you should not translate it that way either. The translators of the Septuagint also had trouble translating the Hebrew word bechor = firstborn. The Greeks had no word for that. Then they came up with prototokos. That is translated back into English as firstborn, or monogenes = only begotten, but the whole concept of begotten has nothing to do with it. That makes it difficult.

If you have to apply that word to the first sheaves of corn, you cannot say firstborn at all. Instead, the KJV uses firstfruits there.

Firstfruits are therefore the first fruits of the harvest. If you translate that word back into Hebrew, you quickly arrive at the word bechor = firstbirth, firstborn, birthright. It also has everything to do with right. The firstborn is for the lord. Everything that opens the womb and is male is for the Lord. That applied to everything.

While reading the Bible we should have learned along the way that the whole matter of the harvest and the first fruits of the harvest is a picture of the end of the age (Matthew 13). The harvest is the result of what the field produces. The field is the world, and the first fruits from this old world are for the Lord. The first fruits, but also the whole harvest, express the concept of new creation. Out of this old world a new creation would come. The first fruits from this old world, or from the field, or the womb, are a picture of the firstfruits who have part in the new creation. There is more to it, for the firstborn is also the one who inherits. That already begins in Genesis.

The question is always who inherits the promises God made. Those are the possessions, which naturally must not be divided among the many sons or the many descendants. It must remain with one, as one whole. The question is then who gets that. It could, so to speak, be anyone, but such a one is then called the bechor, the firstborn. That is not necessarily the child; it can be quite someone else. The inheritance

of Solomon, for example, went to Jeroboam. He was not even family. Well, he did not get a piece of the inheritance (Judah and Benjamin). That was taken away, but the inheritance as such (the kingship over Israel) went to Jeroboam. He even came from another tribe, from Ephraim.

Abraham said to the Lord that He could bless him, but that it would not mean much, for he was already old and it would not be long before he died. He had no children and everything he would receive from the Lord would go to that servant of his, the Damascene Eliezer. So it would go, were it not that the Lord Himself intervened at the time. Then Abraham received a son, Ishmael, but the Lord said: No, Ishmael will not get it. That has far-reaching and world-encompassing consequences to this day and will become even worse in the future. The inheritance went to Isaac. He in turn received two sons, but the inheritance did not go to the eldest.

That birthright, that firstfruits status, plays an important role through all generations. It has to do with inheritance law. Who gets the inheritance?

What it says here is that Christ is the Firstfruits and thus the Heir. He is the One who opens the womb (not only of Mary). He is the first Fruit from this whole old creation and thereby the Firstfruits of a new creation and therefore its Head.

You should therefore properly understand the weight of this word.

He is the first Fruit of the harvest. Is there more to come? Will there perhaps be another harvest afterwards? Yes indeed...

1 Corinthians 15:21

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.
The resurrection of the dead is through one Man, namely Christ, but then more come.

1 Corinthians 15:22

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.
For as in Adam all die = that is the situation of the natural man. You should really read verses 21 and 22 side by side.
For since by man came death;
For as in Adam all die.

1 Corinthians 15:21 -22

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.
For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.
It is the same thing twice.
The natural man is mortal. He has inherited death, as it were, from Adam. But on the other hand, all who have received the life of Christ will indeed, following Christ, rise from the dead, just as Christ Himself rose from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:23

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.
First Christ and then logically the rest. That is those who are in Christ. That is at the rapture of the church. On the Last Day comes the final harvest. That will be the end.

1 Corinthians 15:24

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

The end is the end of the age.

The idea is that although the natural man is mortal in Adam, we who are in Christ will naturally live with Him.

This contrast is worked out a little more in Romans 5, but we shall come across it again later in this chapter.¹ Corinthians 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul;

1 Corinthians 15:46 -48

the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.¹

As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

If you read somewhat superficially, or with prejudice, you read in verse 22 that all people will one day be made alive, just like Christ. And thus that all people will be saved. That is not what it says. If you read that into it, then you have torn the verse out of its context.

Moreover, you have also read the verse itself poorly, for it says: As in Adam all die (that is all who are in Adam). They have an Adamic nature and are therefore taken from the earth and return to the earth, because they were taken from the earth.

In contrast: Even so in Christ (those who are in Christ) shall all be made alive. That is those who have become partakers of the divine nature. That is those who are born of God, those who are born of the Spirit. In short, so shall those who are in Christ be made alive. That is not all people, but all regenerated people.

Christ is the Firstfruits. He is the Firstborn with all rights, but then more come. One should follow Him in regeneration (Matthew 19).

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

That is a resurrection from among the dead, for that is what the term means. That resurrection from among the dead implies birthright. The Lord rises and the rest remain lying, and thus He is logically the First. And because that expression implies birthright, it immediately concerns kingship, priesthood, and sonship.

Christ is risen from the dead;

Christ has become the Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Thereby He has become the Firstborn, for that is after all the meaning of that expression.

In the New Testament firstfruits does not occur often, but in the Old Testament it does. Especially in the law, for there it is spoken of many times, about the principle of the firstborn and the first fruits of the harvest. Not only in the law, incidentally, but later as well.

Here you find the expression in verse 20 and verse 23. Both verses connect with each other. Verses 21 and 22 comment on verse 20, and verse 23 simply takes up the thread of verse 20 again.

Christ has become the Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep, but every man in his own order: Christ the Firstfruits, then those who are Christ's at His coming, and then the end. That is to say, the completion, on the Last Day.

The concept of firstfruits we still find elsewhere, namely in Romans 8. This chapter is about sonship. That is exactly what it is—appointment to the birthright. In classical usage a son is an adult. Insofar as it says sons were born, it means children were born who grow up to adulthood. So we are children of God, and it is the intention that in the future we become sons.

Sonship, however, is appointment to the birthright, appointment as heir. In the noble and royal tradition that has been no problem for centuries. That is to say, that term was no problem, but who the heir would be was. The nobles had, so to speak, quite the habit of begetting offspring here and there and moreover collecting wives. Thereby it all became complicated. After they had kept that up for a few centuries, those families proved to be so interrelated that they mutually decided who they would give the inheritance to. That determined a large part of the history of Europe. In the British royal house that also plays a role, not to mention the Belgian one. There the wall seems to be turning the ship. It is a question of what lasts longer, Belgium or the Belgian royal house. In England the succession to the throne is apparently also a problem. In the Netherlands it seems to be going reasonably well, but quite a few have already been disqualified. The one who gets it does not necessarily have to be the eldest.

Romans 8 is therefore about sonship. There it says that we as believers, as regenerated people, we who have received the Spirit, are led by the Spirit of God to our sonship.

Romans 8:14 -15

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Adoption = huiothesia = sonship.

Huio = son;

Thesia = placement.

Interestingly, it also says afterwards: whereby we cry, Abba, Father! What is that Hebrew word Abba doing in there?

We shall be placed as sons by God; therefore we call Him Father. But why also Abba?

That word refers us to the Old Testament. There you also find concepts such as father and sonship worked out, illustrated, and demonstrated in the course of history.

Sonship is an Old Testament concept. It is the appointment to the birthright. God will give us the birthright. That is where the Spirit leads us. For He brings us up and brings us somewhere, to a certain position, just as was always customary in those royal families. Think, for example, of William of Nassau. He was brought up at the court of Philip II, the son of Emperor Charles V. He had to learn certain things for his function as prince and was trained to take a certain position later

So we have received the Spirit who must train us. That Spirit must lead us to sonship.

That Spirit must lead us to sons of God. We grow up to, when the time comes, receive that inheritance from God.

Romans 8:22 -23 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

The translators clearly did not know what to make of it. They translated sonship as adoption to children, as if we are adopted children of God. That is not so, for we are born

of God. We are therefore not adopted children. Furthermore it says which have the firstfruits of the Spirit. There are manuscripts in circulation that indeed have it that way, but there are also manuscripts that have which are the firstfruits of the Spirit. From the context it is clear that that text is more correct. We have not received the first fruits of the Spirit, but we ourselves are the first fruits of the Spirit. We are the first fruits of the harvest. We are firstfruits, firstborn. Of course, it is figurative language and firstfruits refers to harvest, but if you translate that to what opens the womb, then firstfruits are firstborn.

But we ourselves also, who are the firstborn of the Spirit. We are after all born again of the Spirit, and what the Spirit brings forth is spirit. We are firstfruits of the Spirit. There is more to come afterwards, but we are the firstfruits. That concept connects with the appointment to sons from the preceding verses. It concerns inheritance right. We groan within ourselves, waiting for the sonship, the redemption of our body.

Romans 8:29

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

He would be the Firstborn together with many brethren.

Among = the Greek en = in, with, together with.

He is Firstborn, but the same term applies to His many brethren, namely to the whole church. The whole church shares in His birthright. That is why the church is called a church of the firstborn.

Romans 9:4

Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

Here it says that that sonship is destined for Israel. That raises the discussion about the issue that if we are a people of firstborn, what about Israel, for the birthright was promised to Israel above the nations of the earth. Is the church then Israel, or has Israel's birthright been taken away and given to the church? And if so, is that forever? That question also implies whether the church can lose the birthright again. It all proves rather complicated, for Paul devotes three chapters to it afterwards. For now, however, this subject falls outside this exposition, so we leave it at that.

The question is not who is saved and who is not, but who inherits and who does not. The question is who are considered the first fruits of the harvest.

That is also an answer to ultra-dispensationalists. They believe namely that before the church arose—of which we now form part—there was first another kind of church, from after the resurrection of Christ until somewhere in the course of the ministry of the apostle Paul. If that is so, then they are the church of firstfruits, for we came later. That automatically means we can forget our heavenly position, for that does not belong to us then. The heavenly position is after all for the firstborn, of whom God said:

All that openeth the womb is mine.

Well, we leave it at that for now. On with the subject.

James 1:18

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

We are not born of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. He begat us according to His will.

The word of truth is the seed from which the new life, the new creation, is begotten (1 Peter 1:23). With what purpose did He beget us? That we should be firstfruits of His creatures. We who are the firstfruits of the Spirit.

Back to 1 Corinthians 15.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

When it concerns firstfruits, it is not only about sequence, but also about rank. The firstborn inherits and receives an exalted position. Because we no longer know this, it makes it difficult to speak about it. It is hard to explain what it means to be heir and to be led to that position. It still works when it concerns the Lord Jesus Christ, but that we as church are a noble people is hard to imagine. The church is made from the nations into a people of firstborn, who in the future will inherit with Him. The church will be reckoned with Christ as one people, as a people of firstfruits, above the nations and actually above the whole earth and even above the whole creation.

Do you not know that we shall judge the world? And do you not know that we shall judge angels? We are on our way to the glory that will be revealed to us. That does not mean we shall see glory because it is revealed to us, but the glory that clings to us, our own glory, will be revealed to the world. The world waits for the revealing of the sons of God, for the church. Who still knows that today? Nowadays people have no idea any more about the rapture of the church and a heavenly future—unless they have simply translated the whole concept of heavenly as afterlife. Unfortunately people have completely lost these things, but that is precisely what this is about. The biblical doctrine of election is not about who will be saved and who will not, but about predestination to sonship. Who becomes the heir? Not all Israel is Israel is not about the question of who belongs to the people of God and who does not, who will be saved and who will not—as taught in the Calvinistic doctrine of election. It is about the question of who is appointed as the firstborn. Israel or the church, or yet another people? The answer is indeed the church, and that is not in conflict with Old Testament promises concerning Israel as a people of firstborn. We are speaking about appointment to sonship in the future. Then you also understand what verse 23 says. Everyone in his own order—but that is because of rank. First come, first served.

First the Firstfruits Christ.

Afterwards those who are of the Christ.

The little word the in of the Christ is admittedly not strictly necessary, neither in English nor in Greek, which is why the translators omitted it with great ease. But if it is present in the Greek, then you really ought to translate it consistently into English as well.

Why then the Christ? That term has from of old been used to indicate not only the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, but Christ and the church, Christ including His body. In theological jargon it is then called the mystical Christ. If you know that, then you simply read:

The Firstfruits Christ;

Afterwards those who are of the Christ = the church;

Afterwards the end will come.

There are no more options, for we know the resurrection of Christ and also the resurrection of the church at the rapture of the church. Beyond that we know only the

resurrection on the Last Day, at least insofar as it concerns a resurrection in a new body, a body that forms part of a new creation. So there are only three occasions. Moreover, it corresponds with the instructions about the Old Testament harvest, which concerns the firstfruits.

At the time of Passover you first get the firstfruits sheaf. That is one sheaf. It was to be waved before the face of the Lord on the day after the sabbath, on the first day of the week. Only fifty days later is the harvest considered ripe. Part of it is then prepared and processed into two loaves, apparently from one dough. That is not explicitly stated, but it is clear from what is said later. Those two loaves are waved before the face of the Lord on the day of Pentecost. Those firstfruits loaves are a picture of the church. After that has happened, a day later comes the harvest.

First the firstfruits sheaf, then the firstfruits loaves, then the harvest.

The Firstfruits Christ, afterwards those who are of the Christ, and afterwards the end. That is on the Last Day and applies to all, both believers and unbelievers. The unbelievers will be taken away, into the second death, and the believers will have part in the new earth.

The firstfruits are destined for the Lord and thereby for heaven. The firstfruits receive a place in the temple = heaven. That applies to Christ and the church, for Christ and the church is still the church. Christ and the church are regarded as one whole.

That is why Passover and Pentecost are linked together, through the seven weeks in between. That is why in the fifty days between Passover and Pentecost in Acts 1 nothing else happens either.

We shall look at a few more Scripture passages where exactly the same things are discussed, perhaps from a different background, but still about the same subject.

In Hebrews 1 and the first part of chapter 2 the risen Christ is spoken of, followed by His exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty in the highest heavens. Christ is appointed as Son to be heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2):

Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things...

God speaks to us by the Son, whom He has appointed (sonship) heir of all things. That therefore concerns birthright. That is also evident, for He is set at the right hand of God. He was the One who opened the womb of His lineage. He is highly exalted and has inherited a more excellent name above the angels (verse 4). Name stands for position and title. For to which of the angels did He ever say: Thou art My Son, today have I begotten Thee? In other words, that was said to the Lord Jesus Christ. Those are words from Psalm 2, which therefore refer to His sonship. At the time of His resurrection He was designated and thus appointed as the Heir.

In verse 6 He is also called the Firstborn. It is not Hebrew, but otherwise bechor would have stood there.

Hebrews 2:9 - 10

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

God would appoint many sons, lead them to glory, but the Captain (Archēgos = first, and actually also a synonym for Firstborn) He would perfect through sufferings.

Hebrews 2:11

For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

He would be the Firstborn among (together with) many brethren. Here exactly the same thing is said, but in different words.

He who sanctifies and they who are sanctified = Christ and the church.

Ashamed = to hold back, or to cover. He does not hold Himself back.

Hebrews 2:12

Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

This moreover implies that we who are called to sonship can lose our inheritance. The words about bastards also imply that. We should let ourselves be brought up and run our course, which God has set before us, for that course has everything to do with that upbringing. It can be that someone is indeed a child of God, yet is unfaithful (fornicator and profane = not serving the Lord), like Esau, who gave away his birthright.

Hebrews 12:17

For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Then it was too late. It refers to Genesis 27.

Hebrews 12:22

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

Ye = we who believe.

Come unto = draw near unto = offer.

When you draw near to God, you offer to God. That is why we should draw near to the throne of grace. This means that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. That is the same thing.

Offering is implied in the meaning of drawing near, at least if you derive it from the Hebrew of the Old Testament. Draw near to hear.

Anyone can bring offerings, but when you draw near to God you should listen to Him.

You do offer, but when you have drawn near through the offering, then you should listen to Him.

Sion = Jerusalem = heaven = the city of the living God.

The innumerable company of angels is already mentioned in the Old Testament, but as a designation of the church. We should be like the angels. Where the church in the Old Testament is a mystery, it sometimes hides behind the term angels. If you read Daniel 7 about ten thousand times ten thousand who ministered to Him, you think of angels, though it does not say so, but you should read it in the light of the New Testament and understand that it concerns the church, which with Him will judge the world and the nations.

We have come to those innumerable angels = we have been added to them. We are heavenly beings who will serve the Lord.

Hebrews 12:23

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven,
and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,
The term general assembly is outside the Bible a normal translation of the Greek word
ekklēsia = church.

Ekklēsia in Greek is the designation for the popular assembly, but because it worked
somewhat differently among the Greeks than with us, people speak of the general
assembly, which is called together.

The general assembly of the States General is the popular representation.
General assembly is therefore the same as the church. That is how it stands here too.
Ye are come unto the general assembly and (namely) the church of the firstborn.
General assembly and church are Greek terms for a group of people chosen from the
people, to judge together with the king and under the leadership of the king, and
possibly to make laws and enforce them. Such people are called elders or simply
firstborn in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. The elders of Israel are the heads of the
different families. Those heads are officially firstborn. They have inherited that title and
stand at the head of the family, the tribe, the clan, or whatever it may be called.

Sometimes they are also called the princes of Israel.

Princes = foremost. That refers to people who bear legal authority.

So you find quite a few terms together here, from Greek and from Hebrew, so that we
cannot miss what it is about.

Moreover, you must realise that it is not just anyone who represents the people, as
happens with us today, but it goes by the old method, in which the popular
representation is not elected by the people, but by the king, from above. He appointed
the people and added them to his counsellors or whatever it was. In practice those were
by definition nobles. They were chosen and received a title. Usually it stayed in the
family and was inherited. From of old they were therefore chosen by the king. What they
did afterwards and what decisions they made, the king often had no grip on at all, but he
could appoint them. That privilege lasted a long time, even in the Netherlands. To some
extent it still exists, for mayors are officially appointed by the king, by the crown. In
reality it now goes a bit differently. Advice is given from below upwards and above only
the signature is added. That also applies to the king's commissioners. But that is the old
principle and also the principle from biblical times. When Solomon met Jeroboam, he
found that he did well and appointed Jeroboam, officially as head of the house of
Joseph.

That is how God does it with the church. He gathers to Himself a people from the
Gentiles for His name. A people of firstborn, an ekklēsia, a popular assembly, to be
involved in the rule of Christ in the future. That is why we are called a people of kings
and priests.

We are a people from the nations, but we are not merely a people from the nations, for
on a lower level all Israel will be a people from the nations. Within Israel the same
position is again given to the church, but then in a heavenly position.

In addition we have the statements in the New Testament about the Firstborn and Only
Begotten. These are two Greek terms literally translated into English, which in the
Septuagint are the two most important words for birthright and firstborn: bechor and
reshieth = first. Those terms are therefore found translated in the New Testament and
applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Only Begotten of the Father (John 1:14). But

are we not also born of the Father; why then is there talk of an Only Begotten? That is a misunderstanding arising from that strange word.

Only Begotten = the Only One, the beloved Son of the Father; the Incomparable.

It does not mean that there would be no other sons.

In the Old Testament you read the same terms, but then in Hebrew, about Isaac, when it is said of Abraham that he did not withhold Isaac, his only son, from the Lord. Abraham already had two sons at that time. Ishmael was still there. But Isaac was the incomparable one, the only one of his kind, of a different order from that other son. The difference lies in the fact that Isaac would be the heir.

So Joseph was also the beloved son of Jacob. He loved Joseph and gave him a coat of many colours. Then you already know where it will lead. He therefore becomes the heir, and so it went.

Later in John 1:18 you read of the Only Begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father; He has declared Him to us. The Son, who is Heir.

He gave His only begotten Son. What is so unique about that only begotten Son? That whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. That does not apply to all those other sons, of whatever kind. Hence Only, Only Begotten, the Unique, the Incomparable.

Only Begotten in connection with the Lord Jesus is used exclusively by John. He had a choice, but used that term, five times in total.

In addition we have the term firstborn. That is completely synonymous.

Here are the Scripture passages:

- Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature (Colossians 1:15);
- The firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29);
- And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence (Colossians 1:18);
- And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him (Hebrews 1:6);
- Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them (Hebrews 11:28). This concerns the firstborn of Egypt, who were slain at the time of Israel's birth as firstborn. The birthright was taken from the nations—in this case Egypt. They died, and in their place the people of Israel were born as a son: Say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son (Exodus 4:22);
- To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven... (Hebrews 12:23);
- And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood (Revelation 1:5). He is the faithful witness; namely the One in whom the Word takes form, the One in whom the Word is. He is the firstborn from the dead. That this too concerns birthright is immediately clear from the next clause, namely that He is the prince of the kings of the earth. That He is, because He was faithful, because He was the Believer. Who on the basis of His faith, of His obedience, was raised from the dead. Who

hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

He has become the author of eternal salvation as the Son. Where we as firstfruits have been added to Christ, there we are made by Him kings and priests, for birthright at the highest level includes kingship and also priesthood. He has made us that for God, namely His Father. The One who appointed Him as King, Priest, and Firstborn. In these words it is therefore expressly stated concerning the church that has part in Him and that in Christ has been made a royal and priestly people. We are consecrated to the service of God. That automatically means priesthood. We as church are called by God out of this present world to serve Him and thereby to have part in the priesthood of Christ and in the kingship of Christ in His kingdom and thus in a new creation. His kingdom does not last a thousand years, but stretches far beyond the Last Day.

Because of this calling we look to the future. We are called to glory, or to sonship, but that is the same thing. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him (Revelation 1:7), still referring to Old Testament concepts and statements.

It should now be clear that the expression He is become the firstfruits of them that slept is an expression with a very far-reaching application, in which we all have received a part.

Ephesians 1:5 says that God predestinated us in Christ unto sonship. Those words apply primarily to Christ, but in Him we too have been predestinated unto sonship beforehand, just as Isaac was, even before his birth, just as Jacob was, likewise before his birth. So it is with us too. As regenerated people we as firstfruits have received part in the new creation. Therefore we have part in the birthright of the Lord Jesus Christ and thereby in the fulfilment of the promises that were made in the Old Testament, already in Genesis. That is no small thing.

The laws concerning the feasts are described in Leviticus 23. A feast is not necessarily a festival, though it usually is.

Leviticus 23:5 -8

In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD's passover.

And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.

In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

The slaying and eating of the Passover lamb was not considered a feast. The feast began only on the next day, the fifteenth of the first month. That is the feast of Passover, also called the feast of unleavened bread, because they were to eat unleavened bread for seven days. The days on which a holy convocation was held and no servile work was to be done are not sabbaths. The sabbath is after all simply the seventh day of the week.

Leviticus 23:9-11

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

A sheaf of the firstfruits. It cannot be firstborn, because a sheaf is not born. Hence firstfruits. It will be clear that this concerns the first fruit of the harvest, long before the actual harvest takes place.

He shall wave that sheaf before the LORD = in effect to quicken it to life. That must happen on the day after the sabbath of Passover.

Leviticus 23:15–16

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete:

Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.

This is the institution of the Passover feast and the Pentecost feast. They are linked together through seven complete sabbaths. There are therefore seven weeks between the two feasts.

The Passover feast lasts seven days. It is celebrated from the fifteenth of the first month through to the seventh Passover day. Because it is celebrated on a fixed date, it begins each year on a different day of the week. Because the feast lasts seven days, there is always a sabbath somewhere in it. On the day after that sabbath—that is always on a Sunday—the sheaf is to be waved before the face of the Lord. The Jews have lost their way in this as well. They commemorate that firstfruits sheaf on a fixed date. That is not biblical. It is not a fixed date, but a fixed day of the week and therefore always on a different date.

According to Flavius Josephus the firstfruits sheaf was waved by the Jews on the sixteenth of the first month. That is therefore wrong. Strangely enough, Christianity seems to have grasped that, for our Easter we do indeed not celebrate on a fixed date in the year, but on the day after the sabbath, in the days when the Jewish Passover would approximately be. That is on the first Sunday after the first full moon in spring. Our Christian Easter is in fact not even the Passover feast, but the feast of the firstfruits sheaf. That is so again because the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was on the first day of the week and also very emphatically the day after the sabbath and thus fell on the same day on which the firstfruits sheaf was to be waved before the face of the Lord. The very first fruit of the harvest was gathered and, so to speak, quickened to life before the face of the Lord on the day after the sabbath, during the Passover feast.

That firstfruits sheaf is here in Leviticus 23 already a picture of the resurrection of Christ. It is the first fruit of the harvest. The harvest is the result of God's work: the bringing about of a new creation, the beginning of the kingdom as it was promised long ago and thus the fulfilment of all Old Testament promises that God made in the Old Testament, because all the promises of God in Christ are yea and amen. He appeared on this day after the sabbath as the Christ.

With the word firstfruits we are therefore referred back to these institutions in the Old Testament. From that day after the sabbath seven weeks are counted and then the day after that again, then you are on the fiftieth day. On that day they would again handle a firstfruits. Then they would as a meat offering wave two loaves before the face of the Lord. That is called the bread of the firstfruits, also called wave loaves. There are therefore two occasions when there is mention of firstfruits of the harvest. One is that of the firstfruits sheaf and the other is that of the firstfruits loaves. Because the waving of those loaves happens fifty days later, we call that the Pentecost feast = fifty. Among the Jews it is called the feast of weeks, because it concerns seven times seven days.

Fifty days after the resurrection of Christ you arrive in Acts 2 at the day of Pentecost, where Peter gives his first address. The events that take place there on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 are the result of and flow from the resurrection of Christ. The Holy Spirit was already given to the disciples on the first Easter day, when the Lord Jesus breathed on them and said: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Fifty days later Peter said on the day of Pentecost that Jesus Christ has shed forth this which ye now see and hear. When we were regenerated we received the Holy Spirit, but we were not regenerated by the events on the day of Pentecost, but by the resurrection of Christ. It is never a reference back to Pentecost, but always to Easter. Nevertheless, those two are connected. One of the reasons for that is what we see in 1 Corinthians 15. Christ is the Firstfruits and therefore He should, according to Old Testament analogy, have been consecrated to the service of God—and that is exactly what the New Testament teaches extensively: that the Lord Jesus in His resurrection lives and walks to the glory of the Father, that He has been appointed over the house of God, and that He is faithful to Him who appointed Him.

When He rose from the dead He was appointed by God in the service to Him as High Priest of the New Covenant. For that purpose He was taken from among men and ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that He might offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins (Hebrews 5:1).

Moreover, a priest stands in the service of God; therefore he is called priest. He is High Priest because He is the First under the New Covenant.

That firstfruits status has everything to do with priesthood, with kingship, and inheritance right. That is extensively illustrated in the Mosaic institutions. 1 Corinthians 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

The One who rises from among the dead, leaving the other dead behind, is the First and therefore also qualifies for the birthright.

The little word is is not there, and become is not there either.

In the NBG translation it says that Christ is risen from the dead as the Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Although the term clearly refers back to the Old Testament institutions concerning the firstfruits of the harvest, the word firstfruits naturally still presupposes that more follows afterwards. That is so here too. In the following verses it immediately speaks of what follows after that Firstfruits.

1 Corinthians 15:21

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 1

Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

A comparison is made between the old man and the new man. All die in Adam. They do not all die through Adam, but in Adam. Many think that people die through Adam. They think the cat dies because Adam was a sinner. Because Adam sinned everything went wrong in the whole creation, in all nature and the environment. That is nowhere in the Bible.

Death is through one man, but you understand that this concerns death in all men. We inherit death. The Bible does not speak of the fall of animals, but since death is sin, the working of sin must be somewhat greater than only in man.

We humans have inherited the life of Adam. We have the life of Adam in us. That is why the name Adam is sometimes translated as man. Although that usually causes no

problems, it is not accurate. We have received Adamic life. The misery of that life is that it is mortal. It does not last. Given that we are sinners, that may perhaps be just as well, but a little philosophy quickly brings us to the thought that it should not be so.

The misery in the world springs from death. The entire struggle of human existence is a struggle against death and corruption. It is therefore called the bondage of corruption. That applies not only to ourselves but to everything around us. If you do not maintain your bicycle, it will eventually rot away of its own accord. Everything is subject to corruption. As far as human nature is concerned, it is simply inherent in it. Whether you live decently or not, you are mortal and perishable. You are a passer-by.

The normal word for man is enos = anash = sick, weak, incurably ill, mortal. It is therefore a truly negative term.

The thought is therefore that we are considered to be in Adam. In = connected with, belonging to. We are by nature in Adam and thus have part in Adam. Because we are in Adam, we have part in his life, but afterwards also in his death, which works in us. That physical death is analogous to sin and that sin is death is so.

Insofar as we are in Christ, we shall be made alive. Those who are in Adam have received life from Adam; those who are in Christ have received life from Christ.

God gave His promised Spirit to the Lord Jesus Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and He gives that Spirit again to everyone who believes. Because it is the Spirit of Christ and we have received that Spirit, we are in Christ and in Christ are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies and in Christ were chosen before the foundation of the world and in Christ were predestinated unto sonship and in Him were made accepted. And because we are in Christ, we shall on that basis also be made alive. That applies to everyone who is in Christ.

Elsewhere it is stated that not only those who are in Christ, but also the ungodly will be raised.

John 5:26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

John 5:27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

Because He is also the Son of Adam. The Son of God is also the Son of Adam and therefore receives this authority.

John 5:28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

John 5:29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

What is the good? What must you do to be saved? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That applies to every man.

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul limits himself to the resurrection of life. There is a good reason for that, for there is also for those who have done evil and thus did not believe a resurrection of damnation. They do indeed rise from the dead, but will then die again. That is called the second death. If they are not found written in the book of life, they are cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. They rise to appear before the Judge, before the One to whom judgment has been given. Because they have not done good but evil, they will be condemned and then definitively taken away. That is called resurrection of damnation.

There are therefore two kinds of resurrection, but Paul limits himself in 1 Corinthians 15 to the resurrection of life. The other he leaves out of consideration, because it hardly matters further. That resurrection is only for a moment and then they disappear again. That is also hard to call a harvest. The wheat is gathered and brought into the barn. All kinds of rubbish is mixed in with it, weeds, which are indeed gathered along with it, but are taken out and burned. All sorts of things are in the net. The fishermen sort the good into their vessels and cast the bad away. It is gathered, but not reckoned to the harvest or the catch. It is burned in the fire or cast away. In Revelation 20 that is called the lake of fire.

In Romans 5 we also find a comparison between Adam and Christ, in the sense that there are similarities but also contrasts. There typological principles are employed that are very difficult for many to understand. That also makes it hard to speak about.

In Romans 5 from verse 12 it says that since death passed upon all Adamites, we must conclude that all men are sinners. Death is sin and sin is death. Sin is after all missing the mark and thus separation. That is precisely what death is: separation. Since man is evidently mortal, he is essentially a sinner. That also immediately means the end of all religion. Religion is understood to mean that man must do his best through good works to acquire his salvation or the favour of God, or of the gods, in some way. The Bible, however, says that man is a sinner and that is wrong. He dies and is therefore a sinner, and if he is a sinner, then there is nothing more to be done.

Man is hard to teach, but God gave a part of mankind the law. From that law it is evident that man is indeed a sinner, for under the law it goes wrong by definition. Man cannot submit to it. Nevertheless, even before there was a law, sin was in the world. We know that because all men died.

For our Adamic descent that is not good. Death reigned from Adam to Moses, up to the law, but afterwards too, as has been proved.

Then, from verse 15, you get seven comparisons between Adam and Christ. We shall not discuss them all, for they are difficult sentences. The point is that through the offence of one many died, and through the grace of one Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, many have received life. In Adam death reigns; in Christ life reigns. Through that one offence of Adam... but through that one righteousness of Christ...

If you draw a line under it and add up all those comparisons, you arrive at Romans 5:21, where it says that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

There is also a similarity, namely that Adam stood at the head of a humanity that had received his life; Christ stands at the head of a humanity that has received His life. That is all believers, all regenerated people. Regeneration is a settling through death, or through the cross on which the Lord Jesus died for all. Thereby an end comes to the reign of sin and also to the position of the sinner. Regeneration then means receiving new life, not from the first but from the last Adam and thus not from the old man but from the new Man. Just as the old humanity is all family to one another, so the new humanity is all family to one another. We have received the same life, namely the life of Christ.

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

It does not say that we are cursed with every material curse in Adam. Nevertheless that is the position of the natural man. From that we have precisely been delivered. We now belong to another humanity and are no longer in Adam before God, but in Christ. He sees us and reckons us in Christ, and in Christ we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies.

Ephesians 1:4

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

That is essentially the whole doctrine of election. There is still more attached to it concerning priesthood and a priestly people, but this is the essence of it. We are in Christ and thereby chosen—taken and selected from that old humanity—and just like Christ we have become a new man and have followed Him in regeneration and form part of that new humanity, of which we are moreover firstfruits, whereby we also have part in the priesthood and kingship of Christ, for we are a church of the firstborn. That is the whole doctrine of election. Are you in Christ? Well, Christ is chosen, and if you are in Christ, then you are chosen with Him.

It does not say: according as he hath chosen us to be in Christ, but: according as he hath chosen us in him. Since we are in Him, we have part in His election and also in the predestination to sonship, for we too should be placed as sons, on the basis of our birthright.

Because Christ was predestinated beforehand to sonship, which was realised in the redemption of His body, we too have been predestinated beforehand to sonship. The definitive fulfilment of that awaits the redemption of our body.

The point is that you understand that Adam is set over against Christ, and thereby all who are in Adam are set over against all who are in Christ. All who are in Adam die, and all who are in Christ shall be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:23- 4

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

The translators point out that order is not primarily sequence but rank.

By biblical standards it also holds that he who comes first is higher in rank than he who comes afterwards. For example, Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek. Now that is historically impossible, because Levi was not yet born at the time of Melchizedek's appearance, for that history takes place in the days of Abraham, who also paid tithes to Melchizedek. The Levites and the Levitical priesthood came generations after Abraham, but Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. He was therefore earlier and therefore the priesthood of Melchizedek stands higher than the Levitical priesthood. This also means that when the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek appears, an immediate end is made to the priesthood after the order of Aaron (see Hebrews 7).

It therefore concerns primarily rank, even though sequence is certainly also involved, if only because of the word afterward.

Christ was the First who rose, where it concerns the bodily resurrection from the dead. Afterwards, lower in rank but also later in time, those who are Christ's at His coming. Afterwards the end will come.

It obviously concerns the end of the resurrection. The Bible speaks of the end of the age, of the end of the world, and perhaps that coincides with this end, but that is not the whole point, for the point is that in this order there are three: Christ the Firstfruits, then those who are Christ's at His coming, and then the rest, where the word end also has the meaning of completion. Then it is the completion of the resurrection as such. That will be on the Last Day. In the Gospel of John it is called at the last day. That day is described in Revelation 20. That is also the moment when heaven and earth will pass away. It is therefore also the end of the world, but that is not what it is about.

The resurrection of Christ has already taken place, and before the Last Day we know one other resurrection, namely that of the believers who are in Christ, the church. They will rise at His coming.

His coming is in the Bible the term par excellence for the second coming of Christ. It is moreover a broad term. That is to say, in reality it means presence.

Coming = parousia.

Of course it refers to the second coming of Christ, but it means something like presence, being present.

The Dutch word *komst* sometimes means arriving, coming, but it can also mean the period during which someone is present. If you ask when your mother-in-law is coming, you usually do not mean when she arrives, but the whole period she will be there.

It is also said that *parousia* means what we call a state visit. That is not merely the arrival of a head of state, but the stay.

The coming of the Son of man corresponds to the days of Noah (Matthew 24:36–44). As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the coming of the Son of man. In the days of Noah; there were at least two of those. In reality it was 120 years. Those are the days in which he built the ark and in which the Lord had said that in 120 years it would rain.

Another 120 years and then the judgement comes. Things simply happen at the appointed time. In the days of Noah those days proved to be 120 years from the day the flood was announced until it actually came. The days of Noah correspond to the coming of the Son of man. In practice that period lasts some decades before the judgement on the world comes. You cannot say exactly, for it depends on whether you mean His physical presence by it, or whether you consider His presence under that, in the sense of His involvement with the course of events on earth.

The expression is even used for the work the Lord is now doing, because He is considered present, albeit not in the world, but in us. He is in our midst, though that is not a physical presence.

His coming is therefore a broad term to indicate all events surrounding or of the second coming of Christ. This means that the second coming of Christ is a period. A number of events are connected with it. One of those events is the rapture of the church. That is the resurrection of those who are in Christ. Afterwards comes the completion. That happens somewhere in His *parousia*. That is the last resurrection, namely on the Last Day. That is the final harvest. The harvest is related to the first day of the week. This applies both to the firstfruits sheaf and to the firstfruits loaves.

In His coming = connected with that.

The resurrection at the end is not a resurrection from the dead, but the resurrection of the dead.

Christ is the Firstfruits because the others remain behind.

The church is firstfruits because the others remain behind.

The rest are then obviously not firstfruits, because no one remains behind after that. Christ and the church are thereby higher in rank than those who remain behind. That the church rises earlier has everything to do with the birthright attributed to the church. The firstfruits—of the land, of the cattle, and of men—was destined for the Lord and had to be brought to the priest, or to the temple, depending on the time in which you lived. Those firstfruits are thereby consecrated to the service of God.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus took place so that He would be destined for God Himself. He was also appointed to the service of God. That is why He is in heaven, in the true temple. He has entered the sanctuary.

Since the church is a people of firstfruits, joined to Christ, it is fixed therein that we too receive a heavenly position, calling, and inheritance. The heavenly position of believers is fixed in the birthright of the church. The normal course of events is that when a believer dies, he is raised on the Last Day, after which he does not go to heaven but receives a place on the new earth. The Bible teaches that man is bound to the earth, that the earth was created so that man might dwell upon it, and even that man was created so that he might dwell on the earth. And if he has received eternal life on the basis of faith, then naturally he will live on the earth. Only the firstfruits is the exception to that rule. That is Christ, including those who are in Christ. They are destined for heaven.

Heaven is not the afterlife. It is indeed the place where we shall be hereafter and where we belong, but it is not the afterlife. The afterlife is the new creation—the two new heavens and the new earth. The heaven of heavens, however, will not pass away but remains for ever. That is the dwelling place of Christ and the church. It is a place to which we are promoted, including everything that belongs to that position—namely, rule over the creation.

The heaven of heavens is from of old, while the two heavens and the earth were created later, in the beginning. In the beginning God created two heavens and one earth, but the heaven of heavens is the heaven that is from of old. It existed before that and is therefore also higher in rank. That is why rule over the earth proceeds from heaven. Even today, though it is the devil who does it. That is why he too will in his own time be cast out of heaven to the earth, after which a little while later he will also be removed from the earth, yet another floor lower. All these things are interconnected.

Besides the three resurrections mentioned above, we have in Revelation yet another resurrection at the end of Revelation 20. Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Revelation 20:5 -6

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Why are these not mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15? The ultra-dispensationalist answer to this is that the first epistle to the Corinthians is an old letter of Paul, one of his early letters. At that time he did not yet know how things stood with the church. In those

circles there is an interest in reasoning the church out of the Corinthian epistle. They say that those who are Christ's in 1 Corinthians 15:23 are those people from Revelation 20. Then they have at any rate reasoned the resurrection of the church out of 1 Corinthians. Naturally that is not how it is.

These martyrs from the great tribulation are those people who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and bore witness of Him in the days of the antichristian kingdom. They had to pay for it with their lives. They are raised when the thousand years begin, at the start of the revealed kingdom of Christ.

Note well that it does not say a thousand years but the thousand years. Thereby it is no longer a time indication but the designation of those circumstances in those thousand years in which Christ reigns and Satan is bound. He will incidentally be released again after those thousand years. They believed in it and were on their way to it. They probably also preached it. That is why they were killed. They are raised by God to yet enter those thousand years. Yet they do not rise with a glorified body, with a body of the new creation, but come back just like Lazarus, the daughter of Jairus, and the young man of Nain—simply back into this old world with their old bodies—and enter that kingdom.

That is why they do not belong in the list of 1 Corinthians 15.

When the Lord Jesus dies, it is recorded that some at that occasion came to life again. They rose from the dead and were afterwards still seen alive after the resurrection of Christ. It is rather astonishing that when the Lord dies others rise from the dead. Those two things actually have nothing to do with each other. Moreover, if One died for all, then all died. It would have been more logical if all men had immediately died with Him, but instead we read that they rise from the dead. The point of the story is that it also says they were seen alive after the resurrection of Christ.

Matthew 27:50–53

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

The veil was rent from top to bottom. In Hebrews 10:20 it is said that this veil is a picture of the body of the Lord Jesus. That veil tears when the Lord dies.

Many bodies of the saints = they were believers and served the Lord when they were still alive.

The construction of verse 53 is somewhat unfortunate. It suggests that those people remained in their graves until the third day. They came out of their graves and after His resurrection appeared to many in Jerusalem. Afterwards they died again sooner or later. The question then is why that was necessary. Perhaps it was not necessary, but what was the point of it then? They were saints and therefore believers, but they lived and died in Old Testament times. There was not yet a church, for that begins only at the resurrection of Christ, who is after all the Firstfruits. And because they died under the Old Testament, that means they would be raised on the Last Day, after which they would come to the new earth. But if these saints were believers who knew something about the preaching of John the Baptist and certainly about the preaching of this Jesus, then they knew about our present dispensation, for the Lord spoke about it. About how salvation would come about and how and that the Messiah would come, but also how that salvation would come to somewhere else and how many first would be last and last

first. In short, then they believed in church truth that would dawn in the foreseeable future, but because they were weak, sick, or ill, or were run over by a tram, they died before that time and so did not yet have part in it. Then at the death of the Lord Jesus they rose again from the dead, and it is established that they at any rate were still alive after the resurrection of Christ, which makes them New Testament believers and thus members of the church. The consequence of that is that they are not in the realm of the dead waiting for the Last Day, but in heaven with the Lord. They now wait for the glorification of the complete church at the time of the rapture of the church. They believed in the things that would happen but did not make it. The same applies to those martyrs from the great tribulation. They did not make it and were violently put to death precisely because they believed it. For the occasion they are therefore raised to yet enter those thousand years (in the same old body). Both categories therefore do not belong in the list of 1 Corinthians 15.

The rapture of the church must take place before the Lord Jesus proceeds with His work here on earth, for the second coming of Christ is a collective term for everything God does so that He will establish His kingdom on earth. In the work to that end the church will be involved. When the judgement is set, it is not only that One who sits, but then those thousands of thousands and ten thousands of ten thousands sit on the thrones that are set there, on which the judgement sits. When the Lord proceeds to do His work for the revelation of His kingdom, then we shall be revealed with Him in glory. His work does not begin at the end of the seventieth week of Daniel, but at the beginning of it, for then the clock starts running and the Lord begins His work on Israel. Beginning with the casting down of Satan, but then we are already with the Lord. In that work, which the Lord first begins to do on Judah, we shall be involved as firstfruits, as sons, as heirs, as kings, as priests. In all those terms our heavenly position is implied. For we are after all the general assembly and church of the firstborn, who are written in heaven—in the sense of enrolled. The last part of 1 Corinthians 15 therefore also says that we should inherit, but as long as we are flesh and blood we cannot inherit. That did not happen to the Lord either. He first had to be changed, and therefore we too must first be changed. We may not all sleep, but we shall certainly all be changed. We must put on immortality and incorruption, for the corruptible does not inherit incorruption, nor does the mortal inherit immortality, and therefore the rapture of the church also precedes everything that has to do with the second coming of Christ.

The first item on God's agenda is the rapture of the church. Afterwards the church in union with Christ will share in all His activities in His second coming.

1 Corinthians 15:24

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

Before the Last Day Satan is bound for a thousand years. In that period man can no longer blame Satan for everything that goes wrong in life, for he cannot have had a hand in it. If something still goes wrong, it simply comes from the sinful nature of man. After those thousand years Satan will be released for a short time.

Revelation 20:1–3 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should

deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

The bottomless pit is the realm of the dead. It is sealed over Satan, so that he is locked up there for a time. He can then no longer deceive the nations and can therefore no longer bear the blame for it.

Revelation 20:7–10

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

You are now already some time past the thousand years. The battle is fought, and now follows the Last Day.

Revelation 20:11–12

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

That is the end of these old heavens and old earth. Chapter 21 therefore reports that a new heaven and a new earth were seen, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea (Revelation 21:1).

We have therefore now arrived at the Last Day. Thereby we have come to the end of the history of this present world, and that is what 1 Corinthians 15 speaks about here.

You must understand that these words from 1 Corinthians 15 are still written against the background of the circumstances in Corinth. They were indeed believers, even sanctified, as appears from the opening of the epistle, but that does not alter the fact that they simply lived in the midst of the world. Their lives were determined by traditional worldly principles. That apparently also closed their eyes to the idea of a resurrection. They lived in the here and now and according to the wisdom of this world—insofar as you may call that wisdom with the Bible in hand. That is why Paul takes the opportunity to speak on the one hand about the resurrection, but on the other hand to say that this world must after all come to an end. That line of thought occurs more often in both epistles. The fashion of this world passes away; the things that are seen are temporal, and such statements. Here you find similar statements.

When it concerns the completion of the resurrections, you also arrive at the completion of this entire old creation on the Last Day. That is namely when He shall have delivered up the kingdom (which by then therefore exists and has long existed) to God and the Father and shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

1 Corinthians 15:25–6

For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

If He shall have put His enemies under His feet, then they are still there, but they are subjected. The last enemy that is destroyed is death. This also implies that all other

enemies will therefore also be destroyed. If His enemies are put under His feet, then that must surely lead to the execution of those enemies.

The end will be when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father. This means that He, the Firstfruits, is therefore King. That was not stated before, unless we recognised the concept of king in the word Firstfruits. The Firstfruits, the first Fruit of the harvest, the Firstborn, the One who inherits the throne. That is what it was about. He shall reign as King and He shall deliver that kingdom to God, namely to the Father. God and the Father are obviously the same. That it concerns the Father implies that the One who delivers the kingdom to the Father is the Son.

The Firstfruits is the Heir, namely the Son. He inherits a kingdom.

Verses 24–28 are verses over which there has been strife to this day. Nowadays not so fiercely any more, for there are few people left who take the Bible seriously.

Nevertheless, over the centuries people have had more problems with them. The translators apparently did too. It concerns the relationship between the Father and the Son—even a changing relationship. At the Council of Nicaea it was decided that there is no hierarchical relationship between the Father and the Son. Insofar as there is a relationship, One is not higher than the Other. Moreover, nothing in the relationship ever changes. It concerns a static description of the Godhead. They had great problems with that, for you cannot uphold that reasoning with the Bible open.

Moreover, it is here the upside-down world, for here the Son delivers the kingdom to the Father, while we actually thought the Father had given the kingdom to the Son. That is incidentally also more logical, for the Father is by definition the Giver and the Son is by definition the Receiver. Possessions and responsibilities are transferred from one to the other. The one who gives is called father and the one who receives is called son.

In other words, the Son received the kingdom from the Father.

When He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father.

Below are some texts that precisely indicate that the Son received the kingdom from the Father.

Psalm 2:6–8

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

He therefore received the kingdom from the Father.

The Father gave the Son life in Himself, but also to execute judgment, because He is the Son of man (John 5:26–27).

Acts 17:30–31

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

If the resurrection of the Lord means that He becomes King of a kingdom, then you also understand that it says God raised Him. That is the same as God giving Him a throne. At any rate officially. In practice much still has to happen before it is so, but that idea runs through the whole history. People are made kings and then, so to speak, receive the crown with the words: Sort it out! Then they go out to conquer. That is how it is factually with the Lord Jesus too.

Nevertheless, He will deliver the kingdom to the Father, for the whole point is that the Lord Jesus was assigned that kingdom in the sense that He was anointed and thus appointed as King, and then He must see how He arranges that kingdom. He receives the rights transferred, but then it all still has to happen. Then all things in heaven and on earth must still be subjected to Him, or brought together under one Head (Ephesians 1:10):

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.

He does not become King only when that has happened. He is first made King and then those who submit to Him are added to Him. Hence by biblical standards there is a kingdom when there is a king. The kingdom begins with the king and not with the people. The end of the story is that the Lord Jesus Christ, after receiving the kingdom from His Father, afterwards delivers it back to His Father.

The Son is designated and receives the task of subjecting all things under His feet. When that has happened He comes back to His Father and says: Here you are. This does not mean that He then withdraws from His responsibility, but that He has done what He had to do and gives it to the Father. Thereby it is also the Father's. The kingdom is first built by the Son. When the kingdom is built, then it is complete and offered entirely to the Commissioner.

The only problem with this verse is that you find illustrated here the subordination of the Son to the Father. That conflicts with the Protestant creed. People can no longer place that whole line of thought in the framework they already have and so discussions arise. He was appointed King by the Father and when the kingdom is practically realised, He gives that kingdom to the Father. He does that when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. That is not the same as when He shall be exalted above all rule and authority and power, for then they are still there.

The principalities, powers, and might refer to hostile rulers.

Ephesians 1:19–22

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

When God raised Him from the dead He made Him the Firstfruits and set Him at His right hand. He set Him far above all principality and power and might and dominion and so on. 1 Corinthians 15 says that all that rule and authority and power will be put down. That goes one phase further than being set above them. In our days Christ is exalted above them and in the future those principalities will be put down. That is in the days of His second coming. Under the days of His second coming fall also the thousand years. For they are up to the Last Day.

He has put all things under His feet and God has given Him to be Head over all things to the church. Insofar as we are in Christ, we therefore have a higher position than the devil and his staff. Then you also immediately know who will be responsible in the future

for the devil and his staff being thrown out of heaven. Who are stronger and more powerful and higher in rank than the devil and his staff? That is the church. He will therefore deliver the kingdom to the Father when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

Revelation 20:10

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

That is the definitive destruction of these principalities, powers, and might. That is well after the thousand years, for the next verse speaks about the Last Day.

The last enemy that is put down is death.

Revelation 20:14

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. Whereby death too is put down. The end of 1 Corinthians 15:24 is therefore the Last Day.

1 Corinthians 15:25 -26

For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

The purpose of Christ's kingship is that He should subject all His enemies and then put them down.

Till is actually too superficial a translation, or we read it too superficially. Till with us is nothing more than a time indication. That is not so here, nor up to a certain event, that we continue just until we get there.

Till actually means in order that. It concerns a goal that would be reached, where it is heading. It is often useful when till stands in the Bible to read it immediately as in order that, for then the Scripture passage is usually much clearer.

He must reign as King in order that He shall have put all enemies under His feet, or shall put them. It is just how you want to translate it. The thrust will be clear.

This kingship, as described here, corresponds to that of David. That is a kingship in which continual warfare is waged to establish, build, and expand the kingdom.

1 Corinthians 15:27 -28

For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

God has put all things under the feet of the Lord Jesus. It is spoken of as if it has already happened and in a legal sense it is so. God has crowned the Lord Jesus. We see Jesus after all crowned with glory and honour (Hebrews 2:9). That is no prophetic view but the reality, for He is exalted above all principality and power and might and so on. That is officially His position. The practical outworking of that is still awaited. The Lord Jesus does not make much work of it. Indeed, He does nothing about it now at all. He is not now busy subjecting the world to Himself. According to Psalm 2 He is now chiefly busy laughing the world to scorn. Well, perhaps not He, but then certainly God who placed Him in that position. The nations are in rebellion against God and His Anointed. That concerns the days since the resurrection of Christ, for since then He is the Anointed.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall have them in derision and shall say that He has already anointed His King over Zion. Nothing more can be done about that. The succession and the rights are already settled and already assigned. To the Son it is said: Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. To this day God does not do that, but first calls to Himself a people from the Gentiles for His name. That is the church. That church will in the future be involved with Christ in the revelation of His kingdom.

God is for the time being doing preparatory work, which will be completed in the rapture of the church, after which He begins establishing that kingdom, beginning in the seventieth week of Daniel, which will follow directly upon the rapture of the church. In our days His kingdom is hidden, among other things indicated by the mysteries of the kingdom.

God has appointed Him King. What is the purpose of that? To conquer and put down the enemies. That is what He will do. When that has been definitively done and thus the ungodly have been taken away, including death, then the Son says to the Father: Task completed.

First He said: Here am I, O God, to do thy will. Then He did that will and there comes a day when He has completed that task. Does the kingdom then come to an end? That is not to be hoped. That kingdom remains, not only because that is self-evident, but because the Bible also emphatically teaches it. To that kingdom there is no end. To the establishment of that kingdom, of course, there is. There comes an end to the revelation of that kingdom, for at a certain moment it is revealed. There also comes an end to the putting down of the enemies, for at a certain moment they are put down. At a certain moment that goal is reached.

He must reign as King in order that He shall have put all enemies under His feet, including death. In contrast to what philosophers want us to believe, death is not our friend but our enemy. They have made death a friend since they made God an Enemy. Since people have reasoned God away and no longer believe in Him, death becomes their friend. Everyone knows that when you die you go to rest. Well, no way, for death is an enemy.

He must reign as King and has put all things under His feet...

And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

If in Psalm 8 it says that God has put all things under the feet of the Messiah, then there is one exception to that, namely the One who put all things under the Messiah. God Himself, the Father. He is not under the Son, but remains above the Son.

The Son to whom all things are subjected is subject to the Father.

That does not fit in the framework of most Christians, for they have not learned it that way. He is subject to His Father and the establishment of His kingdom is in the service of the Father. Even though it is the kingdom of the beloved Son, nevertheless it is the Father's.

The Son will be subject to the Father.

This is also just a translation by people who probably had sincerely good intentions, but who really did not know what to make of such verses, because it does not fit in rule 1 of

the Christian creed: I believe in a triune God. Whatever you read into it, you cannot get it right or consistent.

The Son will be subject to Him who put all things under Him. If we have read and studied all Scripture passages about the relationship between the Father and the Son, then this verse also cannot be placed, for we know no better than that the Son was always subject to the Father. He therefore cannot even be subject to the Father, because He always was. That cannot be otherwise, for otherwise He could not have been called Son either. The Son is by definition subject to the Father.

The Son does nothing of Himself; He does the works that He sees the Father do (John 5:19):

doeth the Son likewise.

He does not speak from Himself. He does not speak His own words, but the words that the Father has spoken. He has life in Himself, but that comes because He received it from the Father. He will in the future execute judgment, because the Father has given Him that judgment. He is subject to the Father. He said: Not my will, but thine, be done. If that will were 100% the same, then that statement would be nonsense. He submitted Himself to the will of His Father. Even in His resurrection He did so, when He said: Here am I, O God, to do thy will.

Concerning the present work of Christ, Hebrews 3:6 says that He is faithful to Him who appointed Him. That the Son will therefore be subject to Him who put all things under Him is something you cannot get away from.

Will be = the same as is.

Then the Son Himself also will be subject to Him who put all things under Him. It does not say that He was not so before. The point is that it simply remains so. In circles where the Trinity of God is taught, they also teach the eternal sonship of Christ. This verse partly confirms that thought. He is that Son and will always remain so. Not only in this old creation, but also in the new. He is the Son of God, who built that kingdom here, and He remains. His kingdom too, incidentally. When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subject to Him who put all things under Him. Even then it will be so. It remains so. That God may be all in all.

God is all in all. The connection between God and all things and all people is formed by the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who connects those two. In our days He establishes that connection. That work continues until the Last Day, and He also guarantees that that connection remains, even after the Last Day, in a new creation. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, or rather, there is one Mediator between God and men. He establishes the connection. Even after He has established the connection, He remains the Mediator, even after the Last Day. He is the One who has brought us to God. We have free access to God through Him. What we have received from God, we have received through Christ as the Mediator. Since that has been established, He is also the One who maintains that connection. The statement that He is faithful to Him who appointed Him speaks about that. He is a new creation; we are in Christ a new creation, and in that new creation He is the Surety and Mediator of the New Covenant and the One through whom we go to God. If that is so for us now and it is called a new creation, then it will also apply in the future to everything that is a new creation, even though there is then no old creation any more. That also corresponds with the terminology from the Epistle to the Hebrews, which says that the present function of Christ is that He is Head over His house, in which He is faithful to

Him who appointed Him. He is the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, drawn from Old Testament symbolism. In Psalm 110:4 it says: The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

How long does He remain High Priest then? For ever. There is no end to that.

In verse 28 some people read that the Son disappears. If He is subject to God, then God is all in all and the Son therefore disappears. That cannot be, for that conflicts with the idea that He has been appointed Son for ever. He received eternal blessings from the Father. That is just as well, for otherwise our blessings, which we in turn have received from Him, would also not be eternal blessings.

You can limit the concept of son to builder—that is after all also what son means in Hebrew—but building obviously comes to an end at some point. Insofar as that sonship would therefore be finite, it is only finite in this respect. At a certain point there is nothing more to reveal and nothing more to expand; at a certain point all enemies are put down. Then that is finished. But this function, this title, is not taken from Him, just as the title of High Priest after the order of Melchizedek is not taken from Him either. It is not so that He now does a work and that work is finished after the Last Day and then He rests, or disappears from the scene. He has then indeed completed His work, but He remains who He is and He guarantees that the things remain as they are, that what has been established actually remains. You find these things expressed in the successive kings David and Solomon. David as the builder of the kingdom. Then comes Solomon, and the general thought is that he never had to wage war again and did not have to expand his kingdom. There was peace, and that is why he is also so called. If there is no more war, then you can occupy yourself with culture and industry, with trade, art, science, and such things. That is what happened in the days of Solomon. Everything pointing forward to the situation in the thousand years, but through that situation pointing forward to the new earth.

1 Corinthians 15:25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

This is a quotation from Psalm 110. Psalm 110:1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Until = in order that.

Until gives many people the impression that the Lord Jesus Christ will sit at the right hand of God until a certain moment and then no longer. That is a misunderstanding, for this is a position He has received for ever. It is also not until, but in order that. The goal is that His enemies will be set as a footstool for His feet.

Psalm 110:2

The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

A rod is a royal attribute. Whoever has a rod is king, in the same way as someone who has a throne or a crown is King.

He would rule in the midst of His enemies, which means that He will still be King for a long time while His enemies are not yet destroyed and are even around Him. That is certainly still the case in our days, and only in the second coming of Christ will an end be made to that.

Psalm 110:4

The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

It will not repent Him = it remains so; it will not be changed again.

Not only the kingship, but also the priesthood of Christ is eternal. That can hardly be otherwise, for the two functions cannot be separated from each other, at least not under the New Covenant, for the High Priest is High Priest after the order of Melech Tsadik, the King of righteousness, or the righteous King. The Priest is therefore King and the King is Priest. That is how it has always been and always was, only not under the Old Covenant. That is the only exception to this ordinary rule. The King is the political Head. He is the Head of the kingdom, and the Priest is the Head of the religion, of the service to God. In practice, however, it is the same Man. If the priesthood is therefore eternal, then the kingship is also eternal, and vice versa.

Psalm 110:5 The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. That day of wrath must still come. Then He will strike through those other kings.

Revelation speaks about it and says: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Revelation 6:17).

Psalm 110:1 is quoted in Matthew 22, Mark 12, Luke 20, Acts 2, 1 Corinthians 15, Ephesians 1, Hebrews 1 and 10. That is quite a few Scripture passages. It is a fixed Scripture portion from the Old Testament that is quoted in the New, in which it is argued that the Son of David on the other hand is the Son of God. That is completely unknown to the Jews. The Messiah would sit at the right hand of God, because He is the Son of God. That is why David in Psalm 110:1 calls his own Son his Lord, because He is also the Son of God and that even in the first place.

Psalm 2:1–3

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

There you have enemies that have not yet been put down. They are there in our days. The comment on that is first of all...

Psalm 2:4

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Simply because they are too late. It has already happened, for... Psalm 2:6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

It happened long ago. Nothing more can be done about it. Then the King Himself speaks... Psalm 2:7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

Psalm 2:8–9

Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Which fully corresponds to He will put down the enemies, as if it were pottery that you smash. He does that with a rod of iron.

Rod = kingship.

If that is of iron, it means that it happens with violence, for iron grinds and breaks, thanks to Daniel 2 for the explanation of this symbolism.

So the kings of the earth are called to act wisely and to submit to this King appointed by God (verses 10–12), before it is too late, for otherwise they will be put down. That

ultimately applies of course to all ungodly people. This Psalm too is quoted quite often in the New Testament, especially in Hebrews: Hebrews 1:5; 5:5; Acts 13:33.

Thou art my Son does indeed also have the meaning of: Thou art my High Priest. And if that is so, then it also means: Thou art my King. At any rate in Acts 13:33 it says that this happened when God raised Him from the dead. 1 Corinthians 15 says that this happened when He was made Firstfruits: Son, King, Priest, Firstfruits.

Psalm 45:3

Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.
Grace is poured into thy lips = thy lips speak grace.
Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.
These are words applied to the Lord Jesus. We did not think that up or understand it ourselves, for this is simply stated in Hebrews 1, where this passage is quoted at length and where the present position of Jesus of Nazareth is spoken of, who has received a position above the angels. Here in Psalm 45 He is addressed as God

Psalm 8:7

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

That concerns the same thing as in Psalm 2. There it was about the enemies and here about everything, the universe. There is also a reference here to 1 Corinthians 15:27, but that is a bit tight, for this text is quoted more often in the New Testament, for example in Ephesians 1:22.

Here in Psalm 8 these things are not attributed to the Son of God, but to the Son of man. That expression comes to a high degree from this Psalm.

Psalm 8:5

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

The answer to the question is the Messiah, the Son of Adam, the Son of man. To Him the whole universe would be subjected. That is why you read in John 5 that the Father has given all judgment to the Son, precisely because He is the Son of man. His position as Christ rests on the one hand on His position as Son of man. That is the line from Adam, through Abraham and David to the Lord Jesus. That makes Him Son of Adam, but also Son of David. The other line is that He was appointed Son of God by God in His resurrection

All the Scripture passages quoted so far are very elementary Scripture passages, because they are frequently quoted in the New Testament, or at least referred to.

2 Samuel 7:12

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

Although the Bible itself says that these words were fulfilled in Solomon (1 Kings 8:20), it is nevertheless so that the Bible also says that these words are fulfilled in Christ. This implies that Solomon as son of David is a type of Christ. The same applies to the statements about the seed of Abraham. The Bible itself says that this is Isaac, but the same Bible also says that it is Christ. That makes Isaac a type of Christ.

There are also prophecies that clearly concern Antiochus Epiphanes, yet they also clearly concern the antichrist (Dan. 7, 8, 11). They must still be fulfilled in the future, even though they have already been fulfilled in the past. The one does not exclude the

other, and this is quite a common biblical principle. Such things recur. Some find this confusing. It is not. It simply means that one has rather more to learn about the nature and content of biblical prophecies. That is sometimes indeed not entirely straightforward. One can sometimes prove a particular interpretation, but that does not prove that another interpretation is incorrect. It often applies doubly, and even with a double application one is sometimes not yet finished.

2 Samuel 7:13

He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

This may well apply to Solomon, but he died just as David did. Solomon reigned for forty years and then he gave up the ghost.

2 Samuel 7:14

I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men.

Although the Bible states that these words concern Solomon, it cannot be missed that they precisely speak of Christ.

2 Samuel 7:14 (repeated emphasis)

I will be his father, and he shall be my son.

The word to (in the original Dutch tot) indicates that it was not so at first and became so later.

Tot means towards or unto. Towards a certain goal, destination, or situation that would be reached. He would be the Seed of David and thereby the Heir and Son of David, but He would also be the Son of God.

The fact that son is not capitalised is probably due to the following clause: If he commit iniquity...

People generally do not believe that the Lord Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh, that He was made sin, and that He was numbered with the transgressors. If one does not truly believe such things, then one can make no headway with this verse. People do not even believe that He was willing to stand in our place, as the hymn says: What a Friend we have in Jesus, Who is willing to stand in our place. What place was that in the past? It was the place of a sinner. He was punished. The chastisement that brought us peace was upon Him, because He stood guilty as our Representative, as our Substitute. We therefore speak of the vicarious suffering of the Lord Jesus, although that term is not found as such in the Bible. The thought is in any case entirely biblical.

2 Samuel 7:15

But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.

2 Samuel 7:16

And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

Thine house shall be established for ever, and thy throne shall be established for ever.

That Son of David would receive an everlasting kingdom. His kingdom would have no end. We already read above: Thy throne is for ever and ever, quoted in Heb. 1:8. The most obvious parallel passage is found in Psalm 89, which is to a large degree based on 2 Samuel 7.

Psalms 89:3-4

I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah. From generation to generation, for ever. In eternity there is no longer generation to generation. In the new creation there is no more procreation. It is a kingdom for ever.

Psalms 89:20

I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: That is originally David, but ultimately Christ.

Psalms 89:21

With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him. This expression also applies to the Lord Jesus, as the Son of David.

Psalms 89:24-25

But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.

Psalms 89:26-28

He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.

Even though few may believe it, this was also fulfilled in Solomon. Ultimately, of course, it will be fulfilled in Christ.

According to verse 29, these promises are for ever, and the fulfilment will be everlasting.

Psalms 89:29

His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.

Psalms 89:36-37

His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

One reads words of this kind quite often in the Psalms.

Isaiah 9:6

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:7

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

There shall be no end or shall have no end = everlasting and for ever. Here the emphasis lies on Christ as the Son of David, whereas in verse 6 the emphasis is more on the Son of God.

When it comes to the kingdom of Christ, one inevitably arrives at Daniel. That is the background of the whole book of Daniel: What about the kingdom and the promises, particularly to David?

Daniel 2:44

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

What is set up (or begotten) is of course the King and not the kingdom, but when there is a King, there is also a kingdom. This is the chapter that says the iron breaks everything in pieces and crushes. The words here correspond rather well with Psalm 2, with the rod of iron and dashing in pieces like a potter's vessel. This kingdom will crush and destroy all those other kingdoms, but it itself shall stand for ever.

Daniel 7:13-14

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

The Father gives to the Son the judgment, the dominion, a throne.

An everlasting dominion which shall not pass away = tautology = repetition for emphasis. Just like a wooden table made of wood. Then it is stated again: and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

If you now think that it all hinges on that one disputed word everlasting, then note that several other terms are used to make clear that it will be perpetual. There will be no end to His kingdom and thus no end to His kingship, just as there is no end to His office as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. 1 Corinthians 15 cannot contradict this. There is no reason to read 1 Corinthians 15:27-28 in such a way that there comes an end to the functioning of this King. In both cases He is not succeeded. There is no end to it. It is after the power of an endless life. And therefore...

1 Corinthians 15:28

And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

Even then it will remain so. Even we who have received a share in that new life will be subject to the Father. God is not our Equal. That order remains for ever, just as the relationship between Father and Son.

The biblical view of God is not that God is a personal God in isolation. God cannot be known. He is the invisible God. He manifests Himself in a Person, in the normal sense of that word. He manifests Himself, He shows Himself, He makes Himself known in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, Who is the Son of Abraham and the Son of David, the Son of man, but—what is even more important—the Son of God. That remains so, always. The appointment of Jesus as Son, as King, and as High Priest of the New Covenant was once and for all for ever and ever. He would have a kingdom and that kingdom would have no end; He would be Priest for ever.

The only discussion that remains thereafter is why all this is actually necessary, especially after the Last Day. That question partly arises from not properly understanding the position of the Lord Jesus Christ. That too is an old discussion regarding the High Priesthood of Christ. He is Priest for ever, but does He really need to remain so always, for He brings us to God and once that has happened, that is the end of the story. That is a misunderstanding. As High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, He is not the One who brings man to God. The High Priest is the One who keeps those who are already born again in relationship with God. That position He holds for ever. In theory it is conceivable that His active duties cease at the Last Day, but that does not

mean He is discharged from His position. He simply remains Who He was and in that position. The question is whether He thereafter does no active work in that position. If He makes atonement for our sins and cleanses our hearts from an evil conscience in the position of High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, then it seems obvious that that work comes to an end. On the other hand, one must understand that the function of the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek is first and foremost, in summary, that He is the Head of the service to God. He leads the service to God. That service to God actually means something definitive after the Last Day. That is at least to be hoped, for what else shall we do in that new creation? One must not think of always having to sit with a little harp on a little cloud for ever. What shall we do there? Sit bored for eternity? After the Last Day the creation is only definitive and the situation is reached as it ought to be. All else is prelude. We should now serve the Lord and do so under the leadership of the High Priest. After the rapture of the Church we shall do so in intensified measure, in the days of the revelation of His kingdom. That is of course only a short period of some decades, for once the kingdom is established, it no longer needs to be established. Nevertheless, after that period there has come no end to our service to God, just as there has come no end to that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are also people who say that only Israel needs a High Priest. It was originally given to Israel. Israel needs it, and that played especially under the Old Covenant, to bring the people to God and to act as mediator between God and man. But yes, even the men of God, the prophets, acted as mediators between God and man. That is then rather loosely formulated.

But we, as the Church, who are after all the body of Christ, who are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, surely need no High Priest? We are inseparably reconciled to God and are one plant with Him. Moreover, we live the very life of Christ Himself. Surely we need no High Priest for that? One can formulate it beautifully that way, but the Bible says that God has given us that High Priest and that it will always remain so. He is Priest for ever after the power of an endless life. As long as Christ therefore has that endless life, He is the High Priest.

Once we have understood that God reveals Himself in the form of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, then one need have no problem with the fact that this also happens after the Last Day. If God then wishes to show Himself, the same form still appears, for He is the express image of God's person and the brightness of His glory.

If you think that then everything is finished and the final situation is reached on the Last Day and we no longer need a High Priest, then Paul says that is not so. When all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself still be subject unto Him that put all things under Him. That too was for ever. That is confirmed here in the New Testament.

That God may be all in all. God is all in Christ. He is after all the express image of God's subsistence. God takes form in the Person of the Lord Jesus. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). Outside Him there is nothing. Moreover, outside Him there is no one. Outside Him there is no God. There is none else beside Me. One cannot see God beside the Lord Jesus. One can see the Lord Jesus and nothing more of God is to be seen. Moreover, it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell (Col. 1:19), for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9).

There is no reason whatsoever to think that this comes to an end on the Last Day. The Son is by definition subject to the Father.

Of course, one could say that the Son is the Builder. He builds a kingdom, a temple, a new creation. The question then is, once this work is all finished, whether He remains the Builder. The answer is yes, but not in an active sense. He is the Builder. The Lord Jesus Christ died, but He was raised again. After that, He still has work to do, for He would at any rate establish that kingdom here on earth. He would put all things under His feet. All things = ta panta = the whole. If you now think, within the framework of this chapter, that after completing all this He would nevertheless disappear or return into the Godhead, then that is not so, for Paul says that it remains thus. The Lord Jesus Christ stands as the guarantee of that situation. He does so already now. He is the guarantee of our salvation. Our eternal life, our inheritance, our blessings are secured in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the promises of God, as many as there are, are in Him yea and amen. He is the Surety (Guarantee) of that New Covenant.

How do we know for certain that once the new creation has come into being, it will not go wrong again? Could it not? Many have the idea that the first humanity was also so perfect, yet it still went wrong. History always repeats itself, does it not? Not only in the short term, but also in the long term. People have whole theories about cycles of 26,000 years, after which everything begins again. The world turns, not merely in a circle, but in a spiral. And it is not a downward spiral. It gets better and better. So things are not so bad with our world, for if it should perish again, it would emerge better from it. The cycle is now almost complete, and then the next one begins at a higher level. Some call that evolution, so as to add a biological or physical parallel in support of this nonsensical philosophy.

But how do we know that in the future it will not go wrong again? Because Christ is the Surety of that New Covenant. How He does that? We do not know, but He will undoubtedly know. He upholds all things by the word of His power. That is for ever and ever. Paul writes that here as well. It is only a pity that those words are interpreted differently and that people have developed their own conception of God apart from the Lord Jesus. Man comes and goes, but God abides for ever.

That God may be all in all. The fulness of God dwells not only in Christ, but also in His body, which is the Church. We are the firstfruits of the New Covenant. Also with regard to the bodily resurrection, we shall be the first to partake of it.

We are to seek those things which are above, in expectation that we shall be manifested with Christ in glory (Col. 3:1–4). Within that framework we are to put off the old man and put on the new man. That is the same as putting on the second Man from 1 Cor. 15:45, 47. That new man is renewed in knowledge. There are people who do not want that at all. They do not want to know, for knowledge increases sorrow. The more we know, the more we become strangers to the world that holds the truth in unrighteousness. On the other hand, the more we know the truth, the more certain we are in our life as children of God and the more our faith is built up. That is very useful for us and moreover it is to the glory of God.

Colossians 3:10

And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Be that as it may, we are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created us, after the image of God, namely. That is precisely the intention, for we are to be bearers of God's image. That is the new man. Up to now that is no more than the Church. The rest comes afterwards. In that Church there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor

uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all (Col. 3:11).

These are distinctions according to the man in this old creation. Greek and Jew are two completely different cultures. That distinction does not exist in the Church and therefore plays no role in it. Nevertheless, in the Church there are Greek and Jew. There are believers from the Jews and believers from the Gentiles. Fundamentally, however, these are things of the old man, and we are now the new man, and that new man knows no such oppositions in the old man.

Circumcision and uncircumcision = circumcision is Jewish and uncircumcision is Gentile.

Bond and free = a great contrast.

Barbarian and Scythian = barbarian = uncivilised, and Scythian is then civilised.

They are distinctions that do not exist, for in the Church Christ is all, and in all, in that new man. For the time being that is the Church. After the Last Day there is only the new man, for all the old has passed away, even heaven and earth and the whole of humanity. Then there is only the new man, and in it Christ is all, and in all. That is already so in the new man. The new man remains for ever, and therefore Christ will also remain all, and in all, for ever.

In 1 Corinthians 15 it is said that God may be all in all. That is no contradiction, for Christ is God and the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ.

The only difference between the two passages of Scripture is that in 1 Corinthians 15 it speaks of a completely new creation after the Last Day, whereas in Colossians it also speaks of a new creation, but before the Last Day. That is why it is natural in Colossians to use a slightly lower expression than in 1 Corinthians 15: not God, but Christ.

When it comes to the completion of the history of salvation in the future, one arrives at the very highest level, and then it is said that God shall be all in all.

That expression itself is of course rather poetic. It is much the same as when John says that God is love. Is everything said with that? Yes, but then one can analyse that concept of love and it turns out that in its practical outworking the concept has quite a number of aspects, and then it becomes a long story again.

One can also say that God is light. Both love and light point to unity. Light brings fellowship and love brings fellowship. Even physically light can be divided into different facets, but also in the abstract sense of the term light has many sides. And this one: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. The problem is only that often what is really written is no longer understood. It says that God has spoken from the beginning. When He does something, He speaks. Everything He does is called speaking, for speaking is the expression of someone's being. Something comes from within outwards. When He expresses Himself outwardly, we see there His express Image, Christ, and therefore it is said that Christ is the Word.

Thus in a few terms it is explained who God is. The same applies to the expression that God is all in all, or that Christ is all in all. That means that everything that exists in some way forms part of God and thereby of God's being. If you say that it smacks of pantheism, we say that the work of God expresses itself in everything, or vice versa. Everything that exists and everything that is done by all is in some way to the glory of God and therefore forms part of God's work. Then God is all in all.

The ideal is that everything we do, everywhere we go, and everything we say should be to the glory of God. That in everything we do the Lord is involved. That ideal will be

realised, but then we are already beyond the Last Day. This old creation, which imposes limitations on these ideals, will then have disappeared. After that God will be all in all. Although there will still be a creation and creatures, who moreover have been set free from bondage, which is characteristic of this world, those creatures have free will, but in everything they do God will be present. That is how it ought to have been; that was the intention. The creature would be to the glory of God. In Romans 11 Paul lifts up a doxology to the wisdom of God. He wonders where that wisdom has come from. From nowhere, for that wisdom is from God. He had no counsellor, and no one has given Him anything first or the like. That wisdom and the knowledge of God proceed from His being. His conclusion is then...Romans 11:36

For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. All things proceed from Him, find their origin in Him. All things are through Him; He is the Means, the One who accomplishes it. All things are to Him, unto Him. All things come from Him and are directed to Him. That is often forgotten. People think that the work of God is directed to man and they also think that our work must be directed to Him, but the truth is that it is of Him, through Him, and to Him. Everything that through us would be to the glory of God can only be so if it is accomplished by Him Himself. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do (Phil. 2:13). If you think they were your own ideas, you are badly mistaken. That we cannot fathom that is another matter. Where do ideas come from? We have a word for that: inspiration. That suggests that a spirit, or the spiritual world, has whispered something to us, literally being inspired by spirit. It is not merely that a light bulb suddenly goes on; that only happens with cartoon characters. It must come from somewhere. How do you think the devil rules the world? Certainly not as a sort of traffic controller: You that way and you that way and you go straight on. He has staff for that, and they whisper things to people. That is not a pleasant thought. Therefore many do not want to accept it, but you can be sure that this happens to a high degree.

How do you think it goes with the life of a believer? In the same way; things are whispered to us. We are usually not aware of it, and that is probably just as well. It is the Lord who has begun a good work in us and will perform it until the day of Christ. What work that is, and when and how much, we simply do not know. That does not matter so much; we simply trust in it. Looking back, one often has an idea of how it all was and how it went. How that technically works? No idea, but the Lord Himself works in us. We cannot see that, and that is why it is said that the Spirit works in us.

The Spirit of God is nothing other than the power of God. Not a power alongside God, but the power of God Himself. He is therefore a God who is active and manifests Himself in some way. Thou hearest his sound, but canst not tell whence he cometh, and whither he goeth (John 3:8). You see, as it were, the treetops waving. You do not know how the Spirit works in you, but you may perhaps see the result of it.

Christ works in us, but He is the express image of God's being. We must simply trust that the Lord does what He has promised and that He does a work in us. He would grow in us and take form in us. He would dwell in us. That is why it is also said that we are His possession. He would do His work in us, on us, and through us, not for our benefit, although we do profit from it, but that work of God is of Him, through Him, and to Him: origin, present, and destination, and therefore God shall be all in all.

The wicked withdraw themselves from that of Him, through Him, and to Him. They are therefore put away, and the Bible says that that too is to the glory of God. It is to the

glory of the Judge that He pronounces a righteous judgment and brings a righteous judgment upon the unrighteous. That is to the glory of God, except for those who think that God wants only one thing, namely that all men should be saved. God does want that, but He wants a great many other things besides. He compels no one, but that does not mean that the unrighteous will not be condemned. To the Israelites the Lord already said: Thou shalt justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked (Deut. 25:1). Why? Because God Himself does that too. You do not need to explain to an unbeliever that this is to the glory of the Judge and thus to the glory of God. They always ask it themselves: If God is a righteous God, why is there so much unrighteousness in the world? Wait and see; He will bring judgment upon it. Not yet now, but later, for He is also longsuffering and desires that all should come to repentance. He gives time and opportunity for that. That, however, detracts nothing from the righteousness of God; He will bring judgment upon unrighteous humanity. He already does so in part, but ultimately He does so definitively and over the whole creation. What ultimately remains is a world in which God dwells, a new creation.

We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13). Righteousness is one of the attributes of God. He is a righteous God. So if you have a new creation in which righteousness dwells, that means God is in it. If that new creation is characterised by love and unity, that also means God is in it.

Abstract matters are explained by means of analogies, types, symbols. The Bible does that too. There is no other way. Those who reject that are left with something very superficial. Thus in Revelation 21 and 22 we find a vision concerning the kingdom of Christ and thereby a new creation. That does not mean, incidentally, that it applies exclusively after the Last Day, for it does not. It speaks of a new creation, also insofar as it already exists now.

Revelation 21:22

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

There are not two temples, and therefore it is: the Lord God Almighty, namely the Lamb. To see God means to see Christ, and He is the Lamb from Revelation 5:6, standing as it had been slain. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead. Then He is the temple. The whole Church is described as a temple, and so it is, because Christ dwells in it.

Revelation 21:23

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

Revelation 21:25

...for there shall be no night there.

Glory = light. Christ is the brightness, the radiance, of God's glory.

It does not become dark there.

Verses 18–21 give a list of various precious stones with which the city is described. The difference between precious stones and ordinary stones is that precious stones let light through. A good diamond has 58 facets. That city is made of precious stones. The light goes right through it. With all sorts of colour distinctions. Is this literal? It is in any case a picture. God is Light. His Light reaches everything; there is no shadow. That means the light goes through everything. The light is therefore all in all. It is nowhere held back. Even when these verses speak of gold, that gold is clear as glass = transparent. Like a chandelier. That has nothing to do with ventilation, but with light. It is therefore gold

through which you can look. Now do not try to explain physically that if you make gold thin enough you can see through it. That is indeed possible, but it is about the idea. It is all precious material that has endured the fire and is therefore really a picture of resurrection. They have in common that the light goes right through them. There is no more shadow; there is no darkness; there is no more night. That is surely a beautiful picture of God being all in all.

In verse 29 of 1 Corinthians 15 the thread is taken up again that was dropped in verse 21, in which Paul argues that there is indeed a resurrection from the dead. Actually, one should read verse 29 after verse 19.

1 Corinthians 15:19

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

1 Corinthians 15:29

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

In other words, if there is no resurrection of the dead, then it all amounts to nothing.

Quick summary

Here is a simplified, explanation of the complex and debated topic of "baptism for the dead" in 1 Corinthians 15:29

"Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"

Paul mentions this practice only once in the Bible — as a quick argument to prove the resurrection of the dead. He does not explain it, command it, or say whether he approves of it. He simply says: "If there is no resurrection, why do some people get baptized 'for the dead' at all?"

The Three Most Credible Interpretations (Simplified)

1. Vicarious / Proxy Baptism for Dead People (Mormon / LDS view – Joseph Smith, 1840)

- Meaning: Living people are baptized on behalf of dead relatives or friends who never had the chance to be baptized.
- Argument: The gospel is preached to the dead (in the spirit world), so baptism is needed for them too.
- Why some accept it: Not everyone heard the gospel in life.
- Why most Christians reject it:
 - Baptism in the New Testament always requires personal faith and repentance (Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16). A dead person cannot believe.
 - Nowhere else does the Bible teach or allow proxy baptism.
 - It turns baptism into a "magical act" instead of identification with Christ by a living believer.

2. Heretical / Strange Practice in Corinth (most traditional scholars, e.g., John Chrysostom, Alexander Wedderburn)

- Meaning: Some Corinthian Christians were doing this odd ritual (influenced by Greek pagan customs for the dead), and Paul uses it as an argument without approving it.
- Example (Chrysostom, ~400 AD): A dead person lay on a couch; a living person hid underneath and answered "yes" for the dead → baptized in their place.

- Why Paul mentions it: "Even you weird people who do this — why bother if the dead don't rise?"
 - Why this is likely: Paul often uses local Corinthian practices (even bad ones) to make points (e.g., divisions, lawsuits, immorality). He never endorses it.
3. Baptism in Hope of Meeting the Dead Again (Maria Raeder, Anthony Thiselton)
- Meaning: Some believers were baptized because they wanted to be reunited with Christian loved ones who had already died and would rise at the resurrection.
 - Simple idea: "I want to be with my dead believing family/friends again → so I get baptized to join the resurrection hope."
 - Why this fits well:
 - The word "for" (Greek hyper) often means "in relation to" or "with respect to" (not always "on behalf of").
 - It fits Paul's resurrection argument perfectly: "Why get baptized hoping to meet the dead again if the dead don't rise?"

Most likely explanation (majority scholarly view 2025–2026)

Paul refers to a strange local practice in Corinth (probably #2 or #3 above) that some believers were doing — not something he teaches or approves. He simply uses it to say: "If you believe the dead rise (and some of you even get baptized because of it), then why do some of you deny resurrection?" Bottom line

- The Bible never commands or explains baptism for the dead.
- It appears only once — as a passing argument for resurrection.
- Mainstream Christianity (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox) does not practice it.
- The Mormon (LDS) practice is based on Joseph Smith's 1840 interpretation, not on any other biblical text or early church tradition.

So in short: Paul is saying, "Even some of you who do this unusual baptism thing believe in resurrection — so why do others among you deny it?"

Over this verse, some forty different explanations have been offered throughout history. In other words, we do not really know precisely what Paul is saying here. Nevertheless, the general thrust of the verse is clear enough in any case. All those things, including baptism, are pointless if there is no resurrection of the dead. If it is only for this life, what profit is there in it? What advantage is it to me, after the manner of men, that I have fought with beasts at Ephesus (v. 32)?

If verse 29 concerns water baptism, well then, water baptism is a picture of resurrection from the dead. The following verses speak of the suffering of believers precisely because they are believers. What profit would that have if there is no resurrection from the dead? It would be utterly meaningless.

The Bible teaches that when a person dies, he goes to the realm of the dead. That is not life. It may at best be an existence, but it is not life after death. The classic question is whether there is life after death? The question has been corrupted into whether there is life after dying. No, there is not, for after dying there is death. If there is life after death, that implies resurrection from the dead.

Very early in church history, a church father thought that here someone is baptised in place of someone else. It is sometimes still read that way. Others say that only in

certain smaller sects do people still think along those lines. One can then be baptised for someone else and on behalf of someone else who is already dead. The idea connected with this is that if someone has not been baptised, he will not be saved. Thus it was devised that someone else could still be baptised in place of the deceased. After all, substitution plays a role in salvation, otherwise we would not be saved. It is well known that this baptism occurs among the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They also keep an extensive register of the entire world population and tick off who has been baptised. One can be baptised multiple times there, each time for someone else whom they have recorded in their books as not baptised.

This is an unbiblical practice. That is also the classic view of it, and it is therefore assumed that if it did occur, it was an unbiblical action. Moreover, a person is not saved because he is baptised, but through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is by faith and through hearing. A man is justified by faith alone.

The question is what it then actually means. A word of caution is in order, for since there are more than forty explanations, it is far from clear.

The point is that there are indeed people being baptised before they die, before they belong to the dead. Admittedly, it is an odd formulation, but it is one that is characteristic of this chapter. The question is whether the dead are raised, and if so why and how, and if not, then why nevertheless? It concerns the dead. The use of that term, even though it is a somewhat peculiar construction, thereby becomes rather less peculiar.

The thought is this: What shall they do—what are they actually doing, what are they busy with? Why are they baptised for the dead? In the first place, baptism is after all the portrayal of resurrection from the dead. If that does not exist, why make such a fuss, for if you are baptised, do you not then belong to the dead? In the literal sense.

What on earth are they doing by being baptised and later being added to the dead anyway? For the dead are surely not raised?

Why are they then baptised for the dead?

For can mean on behalf of, but it can also mean in relation to or in connection with. If you read it as neutrally as possible, you have the best chance of leaving room for a sound application of the terms and understanding what such a sentence actually says.

The problem often is that where Scripture passages are unclear, translators have pushed such a passage in a particular direction, making use of the latitude that certain words or expressions allow. Sometimes they come out well, but sometimes not. If you read it as neutrally as possible, you read it, for example, like this: Otherwise, what shall they do who are baptised in relation to or in connection with the dead? What are they actually doing, if the dead are not raised at all? And again: Why are they then baptised in connection with the dead, if those dead are not raised anyway?

If you read it that way, the explanation also fits with what follows. After that, baptism is no longer mentioned, but rather why we also stand in jeopardy every hour. Various negative things that believers undergo for the sake of their faith follow. What sense does that make if there is no resurrection from the dead?

One of the so-called explanations says that baptised must be understood as something that happens to a person. For this reasoning, passages are cited in which the Lord says: I have a baptism to be baptised with..., where suffering is understood as the suffering He would have to undergo. The verse is then connected with the following verses in that way.

It makes little difference in the end. The verse remains a puzzle, but in context it is clear enough. What lies to hand is that he uses baptism precisely because it is the picture of death and resurrection.

Here is another article on this verse:

In 1 Corinthians 15:29 Paul speaks of people who are baptised for the dead. This has always raised the question of what he meant by it. Baptism for the dead is, after all, strange to the New Testament. In addition, the verse offers much room for interpretation, which according to Thiselton has led to more than forty different explanations of the verse. With this, the verse is one of the most complicated texts in the New Testament.

The text

In 1 Corinthians 15:12-28 Paul discusses the debate over whether there is a resurrection of the dead. He himself believes that there will be, and therefore brings arguments as to why that is so. In verse 29 he also brings an argument, namely the rhetorical question why they are baptised for the dead: Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

This verse has always been debated and has been interpreted in at least forty ways. Firstly because baptism for the dead is not discussed elsewhere in the New Testament. Secondly because Paul never indicated whether he himself found the practice acceptable. Thirdly because it is a question whether the word dead should be interpreted literally or figuratively. Fourthly because the word baptizo can be translated as baptised or as washed. Fifthly because orthodox Christians throughout history have creatively sought interpretations of the verse, because they could make nothing of the literal interpretation. That literal reading is namely that there was a so-called vicarious baptism, that is a baptism in which someone is baptised on behalf of, and for the benefit of, another. Such a baptism, however, has never been recognised by mainstream churches.

There are in any case five categories into which the interpretations of baptism for the dead fall. Namely

- (1) that it was actually a baptism for the benefit of the dead,
- (2) that it was a baptism for the baptised person himself,
- (3) that it concerned a burial ritual,
- (4) that baptism was a symbolic martyrdom, and (5) that baptism served as a replacement for deceased believers.

Baptism for the dead

There are at least three divergent interpretations of baptism as for the dead. These interpretations are the most probable because they do not force the original text. According to Joseph Smith, baptism was (1) a baptism that was actually beneficial to the deceased and an accepted Christian practice. According to a number of commentators, baptism was (2) a heretical practice. According to Maria Raeder, baptism was (3) an expression of confidence that one would meet deceased fellow believers again after the resurrection.

Baptism for the dead as a Christian practice

In 1840, during the funeral of a member of the (then still young) Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormon church), Joseph Smith (1805-1844) first spoke about baptism for the dead. He announced on the basis of 1 Corinthians 15:29 that the Lord

would allow church members to be baptised for their deceased friends and family members. To this day this remains a practice in the Mormon church. The writing of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:29 is therefore interpreted by the church as if Paul described an accepted Christian practice.

The arguments for this are that not everyone has had the chance to be baptised. The church itself only arose in the 19th century and thus, for example, everyone before that had never had the chance to join what in their view was the restored community. There are also people today who find themselves in circumstances that prevent them from joining the church. In addition, another argument is that the gospel is also preached to the dead. It is then logical that there should also be a (substitutionary) baptism for the dead.

An argument against this comes from Simon J. Kistemaker (writing in 2002) and Anthony Thiselton (born 1937), who state that Paul nowhere wrote that baptism is necessary for salvation. He describes it merely as a normal and fitting visible sign that someone has become one with Christ and participates in His death and resurrection. It therefore has no benefit for the deceased if someone is baptised on his or her behalf, for being baptised says nothing about being saved.

Another argument against this is that baptism in a baptism for the dead is reduced to an instrumental mechanism (or in the words of Maria Raeder: to a magical act). For the dead on whose behalf one is baptised there is namely no intention or faith. It would then be purely the act that causes the dead to be saved. This would be strange because in New Testament baptism there is always the receiving of grace through identification with Christ in His death and resurrection, which can only be done by a living believer, and not by a dead (unbeliever). Baptism for the dead as a heretical practice

Alexander Wedderburn states that the most natural way to read 1 Corinthians 15:29 is that some Christians in Corinth were baptised for the benefit of certain people who had died unbaptised. This happened under the influence of Greek religions, in which rituals for the dead were more common. Reginald St. John Parry (1858-1935) points to the Marcionites and the Cerinthians, two Gnostic sects, as influences and states that the text clearly means that there were Christians who were baptised for the benefit of unbaptised deceased believers. However, 1 Corinthians 15 contains no indications for or against the readings of Wedderburn and Parry.

John Chrysostom (349-407) called baptism for the dead a Marcionite heresy, and found it suitable for simple souls and madmen. He describes a practice in which the dead person lies on a couch and a living person is hidden under the couch. The dead person is asked if he wishes to be baptised, whereupon the living person, in the absence of an answer, answers yes on behalf of the dead and is baptised in his place. Chrysostom describes the practice as a mocking comedy acted out by the participants.

Chrysostom bases his criticism of baptism for the dead on texts that threaten the consequences if someone is not baptised (John 3:5; 6:53). He wonders why God would threaten the one who is not baptised when someone else can still perform that baptism after his death.

A baptism in the confidence of meeting the dead again

Maria Raeder states in an article on baptism for the dead that it is obvious that a baptism for the benefit of the dead went against Paul's doctrine of faith. According to her, Paul wanted to say that there were people who were baptised (who visibly showed that they joined the faith community) because they wanted to meet again the believers

who had died after the resurrection. According to Thiselton this is coherent with the way the word *huper* was used in the context of the work of Christ and early preaching. One thinks of baptism in relation to the dead, whom one will meet again.

A baptism for the baptised person himself

There are at least six divergent interpretations of baptism for the dead that state that it was a baptism for the baptised person himself. According to Thomas Aquinas it concerned

(1) a baptism for deadly sins. According to Calvin it concerned

(2) a baptism for people who were nearly dead. According to Chrysostom and Erasmus it concerned

(3) a baptism for the person's own nearly dead body. According to Vine it concerned

(4) a baptism for the person's own dead body. According to Allo and Hays baptism was

(5) a symbol for identification with the dead. According to Murphy-O'Connor the word *dead* must be read figuratively and Paul was addressing the spiritually dead elite.

Baptism for deadly sins

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) translated the phrase *huper ton nekron* (for the dead) as for deadly sins (cf. John 5:16-18). People are then baptised for those sins. They thereby meant that it is senseless to be baptised (to wash away sins) if you do not believe in the resurrection, for then you also do not believe that your sins are actually forgiven (washed away). This interpretation, however, does no justice to the original text and is therefore highly improbable.

Baptism on the deathbed

John Calvin (1509-1564), according to Thiselton, makes the assumption that 1 Corinthians 15:29 was written in the context of the deathbed. The dead are then the baptised persons themselves who have given up life and therefore already feel dead. This, however, forces the original text.

Baptism for the own nearly dead body

John Chrysostom and Desiderius Erasmus (1460s–1536) assume that part of the verse has been lost and that *ton nekron* (the dead) refers to the bodies of the baptised who are nearly dead. In patristic times this interpretation had much support, but it diminished because it did not explain how one arrived at the idea that part of the verse had been lost.

Baptism for the own dead body

William Edwy Vine (1873-1949) proposed adjusting the punctuation of 1 Corinthians 15:29. He placed a full stop between the words *popiesousin hoi baptizomenoi* (what shall they do who are baptised) and *huper ton nekron* (for the dead). According to Vine this would then read: What shall they do who are baptised? It is for dead people if the dead rise not. The baptised person would thus gain nothing from his own baptism if he would not rise from the dead. Then it would be for his corpse.

According to Thiselton the change in punctuation leads to distorting the grammar of the text. The interpretation is therefore incorrect.

A symbolic baptism

Thiselton describes the proposal of Ernest-Bernard Allo (1873-1945) and Richard Hays (born 1948) to interpret baptism for the dead as a symbolic baptism. According to them, it concerns catechumens who, in their own baptism, wished to be identified with the dead in their family who were also Christians. It may be, they suggest, that Paul permitted this for pastoral reasons but certainly did not encourage it. The underlying

principle, according to Hays, is that the faith community can act meaningfully on behalf of someone who is unable to do so himself, just as occurs, for example, in infant baptism.

The main criticism of this view comes from Murphy-O'Connor (1935-2013), who argues that Paul would never have allowed people to use baptism—an important sacrament—for the sake of their superstition.

Baptism for the spiritually dead elite in Corinth

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor suspects that by baptising for the dead Paul meant that there were people who in fact did not believe (since they did not believe in the resurrection) and who were therefore themselves (spiritually) dead. The use of the word dead would be a response to people who called Paul dead because he took the side of an inferior kind of believer who was dead to wisdom. Paul believed that those who called him dead to wisdom were themselves spiritual dead people.

Murphy-O'Connor finds indications of a group that called Paul dead to wisdom in the fact that in Corinth there was a group influenced by philosophical-theological speculation about Wisdom, as set forth by the philosopher Philo. This group saw itself as a spiritual elite embodying the characteristics of the heavenly man, while ordinary people reflected the earthly man. The latter group, into which Paul also fell according to the elite, was called dead by them. According to Murphy-O'Connor, Paul would have wished to throw this statement back at them. This, however, is speculation, since there is no clear support for the conjecture in 1 Corinthians.

Burial rituals

Although the context and the original text of 1 Corinthians 15:29 offer no indication whatsoever that Paul was referring to a burial ritual here, some theologians have nevertheless interpreted baptism for the dead in that way. The washing of the dead According to Thiselton, Theodore Beza (1519-1605) forced the Greek grammar, thereby changing the meaning of baptism for the dead to washing of the dead before they were buried. Although embalming and wrapping the dead in cloths was a custom in New Testament times—both Lazarus and Jesus were buried in this way—one can state with certainty that this interpretation is incorrect, because the text would have to be altered for it.

Self-purification after touching a dead body

According to Thiselton, Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) also forced the Greek grammar. He interpreted the text as the washing of those who carried out funerals so that they might become clean again (cf. Num. 19:1-19). Although it was normal for people to wash themselves after burying someone, here too it can be stated with certainty that the interpretation is incorrect, because the text would have to be altered.

Baptism at the grave of a dead person

Martin Luther (1483-1546) translated the term *huper* (for or on behalf of) as above. One would therefore not be baptised for the benefit of the dead, but above them, that is, above their grave. Why one would do this is not clear. Luther believed that it was not a matter of vicarious baptism. According to him, it may have concerned escorting a deceased person to the grave, with the baptismal service standing as a sign of hope in the resurrection. However, there is no evidence in early Christianity that particular attention was paid to the graves or tombs of the deceased. Moreover, the word *huper* in Koine Greek is never used as Luther translated it (though it sometimes was in classical Greek). That makes Luther's interpretation highly improbable.

Martyrdom

According to Thiselton, John Lightfoot (1602-1675) interpreted the Greek *ton nekron* (the dead) as the martyrs and understood baptism metaphorically as the baptism of martyrdom. This fits with the following verse, in which Paul asks why he constantly puts himself in danger for preaching the gospel, but it stretches the meaning of the words *ton nekron* too far.

Replacement of deceased baptised persons

There are two theories that assume the baptised person replaced a deceased baptised person. According to Olshausen these were deceased believers; according to Edwards, slain martyrs.

Replacement of deceased believers

Hermann Olshausen wrote a commentary on 1 Corinthians 15:29 in 1840 in which he translates the original text *hoi baptizomenoi huper ton nekron* (those who are baptised for the dead) as those who are baptised to replace the dead. According to him there had to be a certain number of baptised believers; if through the death of believers this number was not reached, new people had to be baptised.

Olshausen translates the word *huper* in a way that is highly improbable. If Olshausen were correct in his translation, however, then according to Thiselton his interpretation would fit the eschatological drama sketched in 1 Corinthians 15:22-28.

Replacement of martyrs

John Edwards wrote a commentary in 1692 in which he states that 1 Corinthians 15:29 refers to people who allowed themselves to be baptised because they had seen the confidence and courage of martyrs who gave their lives for their faith. This confidence and courage convinced them of the truth of the Christian faith. This is comparable to the way in which Paul, then still called Saul, was a witness to the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7:54-60). The question raised by the interpretation, however, is why Paul wrote that they allowed themselves to be baptised rather than that they came to faith. The latter would be more logical. It is also questionable whether there were already many martyrs when Paul wrote the letter.

Which interpretation is correct?

Despite the large number of interpretations of 1 Corinthians 15:29, only a few are credible. These are the interpretations of Joseph Smith, Alexander Wedderburn, and Maria Raeder. They leave the text intact and translate it in a credible way. These three interpretations (as an accepted practice, as a heretical practice, and as an expression of confidence that one will meet deceased believers again) nevertheless differ greatly. The interpretations of Wedderburn and Raeder seem more convincing because if baptism were beneficial to the deceased, this would have had to come forward elsewhere in the New Testament, which it does not.

(Taken from 'mens-en-samenleving.infonu.nl')

1 Corinthians 15:30

And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

1 Corinthians 15:31

I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

1 Corinthians 15:32

If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

I die daily = Paul looked death in the face every day. His life was not secure. That applied not only to him but also to the Corinthians. There was also persecution of Christians there. Believers were already being persecuted then, and that would continue for centuries.

What Paul undergoes in suffering is his glory. That is to say, he will later receive reward for it. That is also the thrust of these verses.

The resurrection is necessary to do justice, both on the positive and on the negative side. It is necessary to mete out retribution for crimes (unbelief), but it is also necessary to give reward to those who have served the Lord (faith). That is how it is also described in the Old Testament. There are not many passages in the Old Testament that speak literally of resurrection from the dead, but when it is referred to, it is as something self-evident, because God is after all a righteous God. Everyone knows that there is no justice in this world. People die when they deserved something better but never received it. On the other hand, people die thereby escaping a righteous judgment. They slip away and leave their debts behind, literally or figuratively. The Bible then says that it will not be so. There will come a moment of reckoning, and death does not save you from that. The idea that there will be nothing after death naturally helps enormously in committing crimes. After all, the reckoning will never come. Those people hope that with death everything is over. Nevertheless, the Bible says that God is a righteous God and that there will be reckoning. The Bible says this in connection with the fact that here it often seems that the wicked prosper and believers have more adversity in this life. So it often goes here indeed, but that is not the end of the story. There follows resurrection, a return from death, so that one may yet receive retribution, whether good or evil. Paul alludes to that here. If you believe in a righteous God and that He can quicken the dead and call those things which be not as though they were, then that makes the suffering of the believer not meaningless—on the contrary. This chapter also ends that way. Well, it ends with a reference to the rapture of the Church. Then it says...

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Your labour is not in vain in the Lord does not mean that that labour would now have results in this life, but it concerns the fact that the result of it will be seen and that we shall receive reward for it in the future, in the resurrection, at the time of the rapture of the Church. The remaining believers will be rewarded for it on the Last Day.

The negative side of this verse is that it at least suggests—and perhaps even implies—that our labour here is rather vain. If it is about personal results in this life, then it is vain, for the idea that we would receive reward here for our service to the Lord is entirely unbiblical. The Lord would give us all sorts of things, but that is not reward. The Lord would give us everything necessary to serve Him as a child of God. That, however, is not reward, but something like provisions for the journey. It enables you to do your work. Reward comes only afterwards, and that is what this is about. As long as we are in a corruptible body we shall not receive that reward and shall not receive that inheritance. As long as we are mortal, we do not inherit. Therefore the mortal must be put off and the corruptible must put on incorruption, so that we may inherit. That is the thrust of verses 50–57. Therefore, because of that reward, we should be steadfast and unmoveable and

always abounding in the work of the Lord. We shall be rewarded for it. Our inheritance is kept for us in heaven.

All this is connected with the fundamental principle of this whole thought: that since God is a righteous God, there must therefore be resurrection from the dead, if only to appear yet before the Judge. That is precisely what is described in Revelation 20 in connection with the Last Day. It is to be hoped that you experience this as a positive thought. For the Bible also says it negatively: that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for our God is a consuming fire. This is said, remarkably, to believers. It is quite frightening when it says that our works will be tried by fire. Wood, hay, and stubble will burn up. If in your life you have produced nothing else but wood, hay, and stubble, then things do not look good. We are regularly warned severely about this.

1 Corinthians 15:31

I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. That is to his glory, for he will be rewarded for it in the day of Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:32

If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then let us eat, drink, and be merry, for it all amounts to nothing anyway. Enjoy it while you can.

This too is a disputed verse.

Did Paul fight with beasts in Ephesus? Yes, because that is what it says here. But what does after the manner of men mean in this context? Can one fight with beasts in some other way than after the manner of men? Moreover, we find nowhere else in the Bible that he fought with beasts. On the contrary, it is highly improbable. In theory it could have happened, but if so, it must have been during the days recorded in Acts, for in Acts 19 Paul takes leave in Ephesus and says that they will see his face no more. Yet it does not appear in Acts. Of course it could have happened but fallen outside the narrative. Historical accounts are after all always incomplete. Nevertheless, it is highly improbable that Paul fought with beasts in Ephesus.

Believers were sometimes released into the arena, armed or unarmed, together with wild animals. There was a possibility that if they defeated the animals they would be set free. The chance of that was naturally very slim. Such things certainly did happen, but the whole point is that such treatment could never be applied to a Roman citizen. It is therefore highly improbable that Paul fought with beasts.

What remains, then, is that this is an expression. He fought with beasts. Some people see lions and bears on the road.

What does after the manner of men mean? Could it not mean that Paul is speaking figuratively, as people do? Those beasts were not beasts, but men. One must be willing to understand language, after all. Moreover, human authorities are described in the Bible, at least since Daniel, as beasts or animals. In Revelation they are called beasts. They refer to devouring powers. It appears that this expression is simply meant figuratively. In Ephesus the whole city was in an uproar. Things were not good there, and so he stood, figuratively speaking, against the beasts. Read that history for yourself. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus. They were not literally beasts, but perhaps the people there in Ephesus were even worse. At any rate, he had a very hard time of it there.

What profit does it bring him if there is no resurrection of the dead? His life was not secure in Ephesus. In most other places it was no different. Why would he risk his life if the dead are not raised? If that were the case, then the best advice one could give a man would be to eat and drink, for tomorrow we die—an expression taken from Isaiah 22:13 Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die.

There the destruction of Jerusalem is announced, but no one believes it and no one takes it into account. They simply carry on with their little lives. If therefore there is no resurrection and thus no eternal judgment, this is the best advice one could give. The expression naturally means that one should go through life cheerfully. You are here only briefly. You do not know how long. So why seek higher goals? There are none. Besides, you gain nothing by it either. Even those people who think they must suffer here for a better world for their children hope to create a world in which their children can eat and drink and enjoy themselves. That does not get very far either. It is the same thought. The only solution to this sort of problem is that there really is a resurrection and there really is a judgment. God calls the dead back, for He still has a score to settle with them. There will yet be a reckoning. That is how it is put in Hebrews, translated as with whom we have to do. But it says: with whom there must yet be a reckoning. For the rest you can philosophise about such things as much as you like, but Paul simply says:

1 Corinthians 15:33

Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

This sort of communication leads nowhere. It only drags morality down. In this context certainly, for where we are convinced of the resurrection of the dead and the eternal judgment, there it will determine and promote our lives and thus our good manners. This expression comes from Menander. He was a Greek comic poet who wrote many comedies. Paul quotes him literally.

Discussion about fundamental matters—whether they are so or not—has an effect on our lives, on our mores, and thereby on our society. In the 1960s all the sacred cows had to be knocked over and taboos broken. Good manners have been hard to find since then. All norms and values have disappeared, all certainty is gone. We live in an uncertain world in which everyone can do as he pleases. That is the result. So do not do it.

Good manners are always undermined by talk. When it happens, it always begins with people who have ideas, develop theories, exchange them, and discuss them. That generally has a bad effect on ordinary human life. Moreover, within the biblical framework in which Paul places this statement, it is even more strongly the case. You can develop ideas that perhaps there is no bodily resurrection at all, but by doing so you lose your future hope. Then you lose the hope in which we were saved. For we are saved by hope, and that is what we wait for with patience. You lose those things then.

Sometimes it happens slowly, but sometimes from one moment to the next.

There is no reason whatsoever to call these things into question. We are on our way to the reward, to the reckoning, and thus to the resurrection from the dead. The intention is that we should have part in the resurrection of the just and not in the resurrection to condemnation.

Be not deceived!

Paul is in fact returning to verse 12:

1 Corinthians 15:12

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

That is an error, and if you err you are off the path, and if you are off the path you are busy but get nowhere. One ought rather to be awake. 1 Corinthians 15:34

Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

To sin is a reasonable synonym for to err. To sin is to miss the mark. Then you have lost something. If you err you have also lost something, namely the way. You have strayed from the right path. That is decisive for the whole of life.

Awake to righteousness. Have you ever woken up righteously? It means that the Corinthians were asleep. Sleeping generally means that you do not know what is going on in the world. You are in it, but you are not aware of it. Ultimately sleep is a picture of death, but only in connection with resurrection. That means one sleeps but after a time will wake again. At any rate you are absent for a while. Some people are rather absent, not because they are dead, but because in some way they are asleep and unaware of what is really happening. As children of God, however, we should not sleep, for we are expected to be children of the day and of the light.

Ephesians 5:14

Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

1 Thessalonians 5:5

Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

We should watch.

If you err, you lose the truth. Then you lose light and stumble into sleep and no longer know what is really happening.

If you expect that one day the antichrist will come here in the world and restore the old Roman Empire, particularly here in Europe, then you look all over Europe at the misery that is happening and suspect people of being the antichrist. Then you do not notice that an antichristian empire is already being built in the Middle East. That may not be so dramatic, but it is only an example. You are looking in the wrong direction, and behind your back exactly what the Bible said would happen is taking place, but you do not notice it because you expected it somewhere else.

For centuries we have been told that you should especially look for the devil in the world's amusements, in entertainment. That is why Christians were forbidden to amuse themselves. Read the books of John Bunyan. There it says that you find the devil, for example, at the fair and in dance halls. The devil is everywhere, but it is least bad when you find him in amusement, for there he can do you the least harm. Everyone knows that, for amusement need not be taken seriously, however seriously it sometimes turns out. Worse is when you meet the devil in Christian circles, because he meddles with the Bible. He is a religious figure who occupies himself with religion and with the formation of a conception of God. But people do not look there, because they are far too busy being afraid of dance halls and fairs. They look for the devil in the wrong place and stay away from it, but the devil is actually met in theology and especially in Christian religion. There he can gain the most profit, or conquer the most market. And so you find him also in philosophy. He is active, and as soon as you let go of biblical truth and sit down to

discuss all sorts of subjects, you run a great risk. That at any rate corrupts good manners.

There are also people who think that all people will be saved anyway and that everything will turn out as God intended. Nothing can really go wrong. That has immediately corrupted their good manners. Those people no longer have anything to fight for. They stand for nothing. They no longer need to do so much. Why should they? It will come as God planned it beforehand. With that they are actually on the same level as Calvinism. It comes as God planned it. They no longer believe in chance, for they have discovered that everything happens as God predetermined it beforehand. With that they are immediately incapable of any good work. They see no necessity for it either. After all, it makes no difference. It all sounds so beautiful and so pious, but it is simply not true. Be not deceived therefore!

Evil communications corrupt good manners. That has its effect on your walk of life. That is certainly the case here in Corinth.

Awake to righteousness. Wake up! Righteously = ready for what is right. What is right? What is written. Law is what is written. Righteousness is the Word of God. He holds to His Word and is therefore indeed righteous. Our salvation is righteous, for it proceeds from God counting faith for righteousness. In biblical formulation that stands in the law. God holds to it. We are righteous if we hold to the Word of God. That is right, not only in the sense of legal right, but also in the sense of correct. That is useful for good manners. Good manners have to do with certain principles, with norms and values. But norms and values do not exist. Therefore man must invent them. Afterwards he abolishes them again and replaces them with others. That is called knocking over sacred cows and breaking taboos. That has been quite a hype in the West in recent decades. It has also succeeded very well, so that now we have no norms and values left. They must be reinvented. We as believers, however, are expected not to invent them, for we have norms and values in the Word of God. Not that they stand in it, but that is the Word of God. That Word is the only valuable thing there is, because it endures and moreover is unchangeable. We live from that. That Word determines our life. If you break that down, call it into question, then you are abolishing norms and values, knocking over sacred cows, or breaking taboos. The logical consequence is that you corrupt good manners. But surely a little bit must be possible. Of course, but then it simply takes a bit longer. Perhaps a few generations. Then we have broken them all down too. That is how it goes. You are principled or you are not. Do not come near it; it is the Word of God. Those norms do not change.

Wake up therefore, righteously. And hold to the Word of God. And sin not.

1 Corinthians 15:34

Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.

If nothing else is said, then to sin is to let go of the Word of God, for that is unbelief and unbelief is sin. There is only one sin by which man is lost, namely the sin of unbelief. Here it can only be about one sin, namely that of unbelief, that of letting go of the Word of God, which teaches us extensively about the resurrection of the dead in general and the resurrection of Christ in particular, as was also discussed in the preceding part of this chapter.

Why not sin? Well, letting go of the knowledge of God, or not wanting to accept it. With that the term righteously is explained, for righteousness proceeds from knowing and having part in the Word of God. Unrighteousness is rejecting the Word of God.

Paul says it to your shame.

Verses 33 and 34 connect with verse 12 and in fact round off this section. The erring here naturally concerns not believing in the bodily resurrection. The sinning and letting go of the knowledge of God likewise concerns that. One ought indeed to be ashamed of so much ignorance.

We have already spoken about it: they probably did believe in a resurrection, but not literally. Paul says that it concerns a literal resurrection. There has always been discussion about that over the centuries, despite our having this chapter in the Bible. Because of those discussions, one of the creeds also states that we believe in the resurrection of the flesh. That is a literal resurrection. That is also illustrated in the following section. Paul continues his own argument. He knows his Pappenheimers.

1 Corinthians 15:35

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?

With what sort of body will they be raised? What will it look like? The answer is not that Paul regards this as a good question. He says...

1 Corinthians 15:36

Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

The amusing thing is that we might expect a systematic and technical answer about how that resurrection actually works—causally, a matter of cause and effect—but no, instead we are given analogies.

We have unlearned that way of thinking and reasoning and can now only think causally. Beyond that we see no connections any more. Yet in the Bible, in antiquity, and in large parts of the world, the mode of reasoning that follows is entirely legitimate and indeed perfectly logical. It is simply not causal. It does not proceed along that straight line but jumps across to a parallel along another line. It is explained by means of that other line. The trouble is that we are always inclined to think that if it is not causal, then it is symbolic. Is it literal? No? Then it is figurative. As though there could not be all sorts of different ways of being figurative. God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets (Heb. 1:1). One of those manners is literal language. Another is figurative language. Are there any more? Is it literal, or is it imagery? The bread we eat—is that not communion with the body of Christ? Is that literal or figurative? Christians have quarrelled over that for centuries. Something so simple. They have simply lost it. It is not even about something specifically biblical; it is about the mode of thinking, the mode of reasoning. Paul does not address the question of that body—how it emerges from the resurrection and how that happens, and so on. He says:

1 Corinthians 15:36

Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: He is no longer speaking about people now but gives an example from nature, particularly drawn from a grain of seed.

1 Corinthians 15:37

And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

1 Corinthians 15:38

But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

This is not merely an example from nature. The grain of seed is sown and dies. That must happen, otherwise it will not germinate. When it germinates, a stalk emerges from it, with a great many grains on it.

What is sown dies, and then the life of that grain of seed arises. That life expresses itself in what literally rises up. Is that the same? No, it is not the same, but what rises up comes from what was sown, and when it rises up, what was sown is no longer present. Then it has been transformed; then it has been swallowed up in victory (v. 54). What has died has, as it were, been swallowed up by what rises up.

That is not merely an image from nature but from creation. God gives it a body as it has pleased Him. The whole creation expresses higher, invisible truths. Everything is symbolism. Moreover, it is a good Christian tradition to believe that God has revealed Himself in Scripture and in the creature. That is to say, in the Bible and in creation. Man could—or might have—known God from creation, for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:20). You can learn a great deal from nature about who God is and what He does. Whether that is symbolism or analogies makes no difference; it is entirely biblical. We should look at nature and learn something from it.

That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die, and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be. The same grain of seed does not come up, but something else. God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. If you sow barley, then wheat does not come up. Each its own body. It was barley and it remains barley. What you sow is not the same as what comes up afterwards, yet in a high degree it is. What is sown disappears, and what comes up corresponds to and is analogous to what was sown.

In John 12 the Lord Jesus uses the same image.

John 12:23–24

And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

The Lord speaks here about Himself. He does so somewhat distantly, for He speaks of the Son of man. That is the title He bore, a Messianic title, incidentally. The Son of man would have to die in order to bring forth fruit, to be productive, to have any result from His life. For that He would first have to die and rise again. The choice of words is drawn directly from nature.

If the grain of wheat does not fall into the ground and die, it remains just that one grain. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. This image of the grain of wheat applies in the first place to the Lord Jesus Himself. He is that grain of wheat, but it is the application of a general principle to the Son of man. Everything in this world passes away. Man is after all a mortal being. He must bear fruit, but for that he will have to rise from the dead, and that will indeed happen.

In the parable of the tares there is wheat that is sown, but the enemy sows tares. Both come up and grow together. In the future, in the end of the age, both will be separated from one another. That corresponds to the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust.

The grain is therefore sown and disappears into death. Then it rises up, and what rises up comes directly from what was sown. Then there follow all sorts of what if questions. What if a man is not buried at all but is completely ground up, or cremated, or eaten by a shark? You can make it as difficult as you like, but the ordinary rule is that where there is resurrection, as described here in 1 Corinthians 15, the grave is empty afterwards. We know that for certain because the grave of the Lord Jesus was empty. The message was even: He is not here: for he is risen. The message was not: Here lies His mortal remains, but He is risen.

In the resurrection the story is not: What lies here is His corpse, but He is not here, for He has started again somewhere else. That is Buddhist: he is buried here, but reincarnated there. That is not resurrection. Nor is it as Nico ter Linden once said—that resurrection concerns someone who lives on in our hearts and thoughts. That is how people speak nowadays about loved ones who have died: Mother is still with us. Some even keep the room tidy, because he or she might come back. That is simply not recognising what death is. Resurrection is the opposite.

According to the Bible the graves open. People cite Ezekiel 37:12

Therefore prophesy and say unto them,

Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

That does not concern resurrection but graves in a figurative sense. Israel is regarded as dead and buried among the nations but will in the future be gathered back from there. The analogy is consistently carried through, and so it says that God will cause them to come up out of their graves.

Others say: You do not really think the Lord needs those bodies? No, He does not, but He does use them, for that is what the Bible teaches us. Even in the extreme case, when God makes a new creation, the old is no more. That new creation is then not somewhere else, leaving the old behind. No, the old earth is then no more. No place was found for it. It is nowhere. It has been swallowed up in victory and transformed into a new one. The body of the Lord Jesus was not replaced in the sense that the one disappeared and the other appeared, but the dead body is found again in the risen body.

There are passages of Scripture in which it says the disciples did not recognise Him, although sometimes it says God had arranged it so, but on other occasions they do recognise Him but do not want to believe it is He. Then they have to feel the scars in His hands and in His side. Those are not painted on but real. At any rate it must be clear that the risen One is recognisable as the One who died.

In Acts 1 it is expressly said that the disciples were witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. That does not only mean that they spoke about Him but also that they had known Him before He died and that they recognised Him in His resurrection. That is why they speak about it. That is what witnessing is.

But anyway, that has already been discussed at length earlier in this chapter. The grave was empty; Jesus was raised, and it concerns a bodily resurrection. Is it still the same body? Yes, it is still that same body. Is that body still the same? No, it is no longer the same body. It has been changed, but in essence it is the same body. That body is now

glorified, clothed, invested, overclothed. The old is regarded as put off. The old creation is regarded as a garment, and what goes into the grave is also regarded as a garment, a material covering.

The essence of man is not physically graspable. Man is in large measure abstract. Man is what he thinks and what he remembers. The question remains whether the things we think and remember are fixed in this body. People still do not know exactly how that works. Only that brain damage causes disturbances. Even if one could point to where memory is located, it is still very questionable whether it is really a little thing in which our memory is fixed, like a drawer where you put things. In our lives we take in a great many things we actually do not want to take in. They enter our lives and you have to give them a place. When you start thinking, a great many things come up that you would prefer to have forgotten. And yet you cannot forget them, because those things have been decisive for your life. That applies also to the good things. The trouble is that it is one drawer. If you pull it open and you are a good person, the good comes out first, and if you are a bad person, the bad comes out first. The question is whether all those memories really lie in that drawer, or whether it is a sort of interface, a transmitter and receiver.

The development of the computer is going in that direction: you no longer store the data on the hard drive but everything goes via the cable, via the ether, somewhere far away on a server. When you need it again, it comes back in via the interface or the modem. How is it with your own memories? Are they in yourself, or are you connected wirelessly to something? And if it is a wireless connection, how secure is it? And how do you know for certain that the memory coming in via the wireless connection was your own memory and not coming from someone else's domain?

We are now talking about reincarnation. That is influence from powers and authorities who misuse the connection so that people remember things they never actually experienced themselves but yet know with absolute certainty. The reverse also happens: people have experienced things of which they have absolutely no recollection any more. We do not really know how it works, but the likelihood is great that a great deal of who we are is not fixed in our body but only expresses itself in our body.

Be that as it may, the risen Christ is still Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of man and the Son of David, but at the same time He is the express image of God's being. Can the body of such a Man then contain the whole Godhead, or is there some sort of wireless connection with the greatest Domain that exists? Is there an invisible connection with God, who expresses Himself in and manifests Himself in an appearance (phantom), in an image, namely Jesus of Nazareth?

He is moreover the brightness of God's glory. Here at least there is the suggestion of some sort of connecting ray. Not that it is clear exactly how it works, but they are analogies. How do things work and where do they come from?

There is also such a thing as telepathy. A family member dies and you experience it. You feel it. You know something has happened and wake up. Such things happen. How can that be? It presupposes some sort of cross-connection between two people, or a vertical connection between you and something else.

If we burn our fingers, we pull our hand back before we know it was so hot. The reaction comes first, because we no longer have to think about it. Before it penetrates our consciousness that it was wrong, we have already pulled our hand back. We call that a reflex. Some things, such as riding a bicycle, for example, happen outside our

consciousness. What once required thought now happens completely automatically. Yet it still goes through the head, but it presents itself as a direct horizontal connection. Such contacts can evidently also exist between people. Not that it is normal, but it does explain the phenomena that occur.

If you carry on like that, you naturally arrive at the biblical idea of the existence of family ties. Where is that bond then? Can you cut it or stretch it? Yet it is there. By biblical standards even very strong, for if someone has done something wrong, sometimes the whole family is punished along with them. We say they are all individuals, but the Lord counts them as a family. The reverse is also true. If someone has done something good and is blessed by God, it works through into the whole family and even to many generations. Why? Because it is one. Yes, there is something that binds them, but in what way does that happen? Not on the physical level in any case. Since it does not express itself in matter, materialists therefore have no use for it and simply deny it. In other cultures, where people are less materialistically inclined than we are, they have no problem with it and do not seek an explanation either. They know that it is so.

Physical things in nature are always outworkings of higher things. Probably those things technically work in the same way. They are regulated from a centre. A man sows, and what comes up has its own body, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him. Not that God gave it a body because He originally fixed it that way in a law of nature and it then runs independently. The thought is rather that God upholds this world and that the power of God works to this day in every grain of seed that germinates and comes up. Of course there are physicists who can explain how it works. That is interesting, but it is much more interesting that it is a wonder of God who does this. That is how it works, at any rate according to the Bible. He upholds the world and preserves it together. He also develops a plan in that world. That there is a very strong jammer in between transmitting a lot of spam is true.

As soon as we have found the truth in the Word of God, we are immediately bombarded with a great deal of spam with alternative teachings. The reaction, however, is: Be not deceived! Evil communications corrupt good manners.

That is precisely what the devil does. Not as amusement, but in deadly earnest. It is then understandable that God makes a new creation out of an old one. It does not lose its identity, but it loses certain characteristics that were disturbing and must be regarded as diseased, but which have thereafter disappeared. That means that He is still in some way involved in it. That points to God's continuing involvement with the creation.

Colossians 1:17

And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

The whole creation is upheld by Him. Together, as one whole. In the Old Testament there are statements about the succession of seasons, the rising and setting of sun, moon, and stars. It is formulated there in such a way that God evidently has a hand in it Himself. He causes it to happen. How? No idea. How will the dead be raised? We do not know that either, but that He will do it is set forth at length here. As it works in nature, by that same analogy is also the resurrection of the body.

1 Corinthians 15:38

But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. It is not arbitrary. Out of barley comes barley, out of wheat wheat, out of men men.

1 Corinthians 15:39

All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

What we call flesh is not all the same. We even distinguish between the flesh of a chicken, a goose, a duck, a turkey, and not to mention an ostrich. Yet they are all poultry. The flesh of fish is again quite different from that of poultry, but not all fish have the same flesh either. It is all different. That does not apply only to the different animal species, for...

1 Corinthians 15:40

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

Some bodies belong in heaven, others on earth. Moreover, heavenly bodies have a different glory from earthly ones. Paul is probably speaking about powers and authorities in the air and thus about what we collectively call angels. It is not all identical. We also know heavenly bodies as heavenly bodies, such as the sun, moon, and stars.

1 Corinthians 15:41

There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

There are also planets and asteroids, comets and black holes, meteorites, and so on. That is all called stars in the Bible.

The word star comes from the Hebrew word satar. That word means that we do not know what it is. Satar is the word for hiding, hiddenness. The amusing thing is that a star is therefore actually a UFO, a thing in the sky of which we do not know what it is. We have theories about it, models of calculation, but that is all we know. Nevertheless, one is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars, and the stars differ from one another in glory.

Glory is a synonym for light. One star therefore gives more light than another. The sun gives especially much light, the moon rather less.

In astronomy the stars are even classified according to brightness = magnitude. With magnitude you think of amount of light and size, but also of glory. It is all different.

1 Corinthians 15:42

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

So different will the resurrection of the dead also be. There is at any rate a difference between what is sown and what is raised. It is in high degree the same, for barley brings forth barley and wheat, wheat and a man in the resurrection also brings forth a man, but it is nevertheless different.

It is sown in corruption and it is raised in incorruption. What is sown is mortal, but when it is raised it is incorruptible. You can dress the deceased beautifully, lay him in a satin-lined coffin, but in fact those things serve to obscure the reality. What is sown is not called mortal remains for nothing. You can sometimes even see that it is empty. It has had its function. We treat it with respect, but nevertheless, it is sown in corruption and it is raised in incorruption. At least something must have changed. That is of course also

the thrust of the statement. Note that Paul here speaks exclusively about the resurrection of the just. They are raised in incorruption, in what is elsewhere called a glorified body. It is at any rate more glorious than what was sown.

1 Corinthians 15:43

It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

You may wish to honour the deceased, but he or she lies there dishonourably. It is also sown in weakness, if only because it concerns temporal things. Nevertheless it is raised in power. That is of course again a synonym for glory and incorruption. It is therefore the same thought three times, formulated with different words.

The use of burial is symbolism. Cremation is a much more efficient, hygienic way to care for the dead. That also happens in many cultures.

Burial, however, is actually the expression of belief in the resurrection. The body is namely sown. Where people do not believe in the resurrection and moreover have no idea of symbolism, there cremation is indeed a neat idea. In the Netherlands it is not a requirement that the dead be buried. It is a Christian custom, but not a Christian requirement. Nevertheless, the essence of burial is that of sowing.

1 Corinthians 15:44

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body

.A corruptible body: in dishonour, in weakness, a natural body.

A raised body: in glory, incorruption, and power, a spiritual body. A natural body is sown, a spiritual body is raised.

Natural = psychikos = psyche = soul. A soulish body, therefore. There is a body that is soul and there is a body that is spirit. For us that creates problems, because in our normal language there is no longer any distinction between spirit and soul. We do not know that distinction and therefore it disappears from our language as well. If you have spiritual problems, you must go to the psychiatrist. The psychiatrist deals with the psyche = soul. Spirit is something else.

In the Bible the psyche, the soul, the natural body, is the designation of the old man and of the corruptible life of the old man. In fact it is the practical life of the old man, his doing and leaving. His doing and leaving are identified with his body. That is why the Bible speaks of the mortality of the soul. Man is a living soul; he does not have one. Man became a living soul (Gen. 2:7). Afterwards the Bible also speaks of dead souls, in the KJV inevitably translated as dead bodies. You can touch dead souls; then you become unclean. Then you must be cleansed again according to the ordinances of the law. In short, this material body is reckoned to the soul, because it is the instrument for the walk of man, while the walk of man is in essence actually the soul. The material body is not excepted from that, but forms part of it. That is why it says: The soul that sinneth, it shall die (Ezek. 18:20).

The soul, when it has died, is also buried. In translation that gets a bit lost.

The soul therefore has to do with our fleshly walk and with the days of the flesh. That body dies. In translation that is therefore called the natural body.

If the soulish body is a body that is soul, then the spiritual body is a body that is spirit.

Now spirit is a rather broad term. It is the designation of all sorts of things, but in

essence it is the designation of invisible things, of things that we cannot perceive with our soulish eyes.

Spirit is etymologically the same word as gas. In some parts of the Netherlands the word *geest* is pronounced without the 't'. Spirit is gas and gas is spirit, because it is invisible. It therefore concerns an invisible body. For materialists this is incomprehensible. That body withdraws itself from our physical perception. But then so much withdraws itself from our perception, while it certainly exists. We call that abstractions. Our lives are in large measure determined by abstractions, by invisible things. We do not see them and therefore do not know how to grasp them either. Freud said that everything in life revolves around love, but who can say what it looks like? Not how it expresses itself, but what it is. How do you get hold of it. According to Freud love is the force that works in all nature. Those abstract concepts determine our life.

The body that is raised is invisible to the natural man. That is why it is a spiritual body. The prime example is still the Lord Jesus Christ. He had risen and His grave was empty. No one saw Him come out of it. When they met Him somewhere, they did not know where He came from. We call that His appearances. He appeared to the Emmaus disciples, He appeared to Mary, He appeared in the midst of the disciples in the upper room and said: Peace be unto you. He appeared and disappeared again, just as in the Old Testament angels appeared and disappeared, or the Angel of the LORD, who appeared and disappeared. He has a body, but for us not visible, unless it is made visible for us on that occasion. That is then called an appearance.

At the rapture of the Church you must therefore reckon that the graves open. Whether people can see that is very questionable. No one saw the Lord Jesus come out of His grave either. We do not know of course whether anyone was there at all, but at any rate it was not seen. If in verse 51 it says that we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed and we call that the rapture of the Church, because it is so called elsewhere, then you must reckon that we who are still here will in the same moment become invisible. We receive from one moment to the next a spiritual body. Then the visible is no more and therefore there is nothing more to see. We are changed and thereby indeed taken up, in several meanings of the term. We have arrived in a higher form of life. That life is of a different nature. To us it seems a very great transition, but it is not as great as we think. In our imagination there is a great threshold at the end of everything we can see. If something withdraws itself from our perception, then for us it has definitively crossed a boundary. That is so, but seen from a general standpoint it has changed from one form to another. It has put on immortality. The matter has been transformed into antimatter, or however you want to call it. The visible world is in some way connected to the invisible world. We shall absolutely never understand a great deal in this world, because we see only half of the world. The other half is there, but we cannot perceive it. We belong to that other half and are promoted there as well. Of course it is all rather oversimplified.

Be that as it may, the natural body stands over against the spiritual body. It is even stronger. There is good biblical reason to think that this spiritual body spoken of here does not come into being only in the future, but that it already exists and is being formed while we are here. The Bible teaches indeed that we shall in the future be manifested with Christ in glory and also that we in the resurrection shall have a spiritual body and in any case no longer a soulish body, but the Bible also teaches that we already now receive glory, or are in the process of receiving it and being glorified. That belongs,

however, to the spiritual domain and that means that we do not see it. What is promised us for the future is that it will then be seen, on the one hand by us and subsequently also by others, because it will be revealed. We shall after all be manifested with Christ in glory. It therefore concerns a glory that we are already in the process of acquiring. That glory forms part of our resurrection body. Up to now, however, we are hindered in our perception by the material body.

Paul speaks of being bound and being loosed. To depart and to be with Christ is far better (Phil. 1:23). He does not say: To depart and to go to Christ. That cannot be, for we are already with Christ now. We are hindered, however, bound to, or shut up in this body. To be loosed and to be with Christ is better than to be bound with Christ. That latter is our present position. What will be revealed in the future we already have in large part. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ and in Romans 8 it says that we are already glorified, although it also says that that glory shall be revealed in us. If you add those things together, it means that we are already in the process of receiving that glory, but that it will only be revealed at the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23). In verse 30 of the same chapter it says, with a somewhat difficult construction: Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

We as children of God are called. We are partakers of the heavenly calling and we should walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called. Are we justified? Yes. Are we glorified? The question is not whether we experience it, feel it, or whatever, but simply whether we are glorified. According to this verse we are, or are being, for there is no difference between being and becoming.

I hold that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18). It appears that here it is not speaking of a glory that comes to us and will thus be revealed to us in the future, but that it is a glory that is upon us which will be revealed. That is not a random interpretation of this verse, but rests on the explanation given in the following verse.

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God (v. 19). To whom will that glory be revealed? According to verse 19 to the creature. For = explanatory conjunction.

Romans 8:19

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

It is therefore natural in verse 18 to read that it concerns a glory that is upon us which is going to be revealed to the creation. It concerns a glory that clings to us. A glory that we wear, with which we have been clothed. That will be revealed to the world.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory (Col. 3:4). To whom? To the world. In other words, it does not say here that we ourselves shall receive glory in the future, but that we have that glory—or are in the process of obtaining it—and that glory will in the future be seen upon us by the world. By ourselves, of course, as well. That revelation to the world can only take place if we have already received that glory beforehand. If you understand that glory is one of the synonyms for the inheritance kept for us in heaven, then you also understand that that glory is indeed waiting for us, but is also genuinely ours.

Nevertheless, we shall in the future receive such a glorious body, such a spiritual body. According to the words that follow, it becomes clear that receiving that spiritual body is

directly connected with the rapture of the Church. As long as we are in a mortal body, we cannot inherit. Therefore the old body must yet be put off. The Church is collectively placed in that inheritance at the time of our manifestation before the judgment seat of Christ, which in turn takes place at the time of the rapture of the Church and has the purpose of making us capable of inheriting.

1 Corinthians 15:45

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

The connection somewhat escapes us here, unless we know that the word natural is the word soulish from Genesis 2.

1 Corinthians 15:46

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

In this translation the thread of the argument gets a bit lost. Of course you can try hard to understand it, but in the Greek it is much clearer than the translation suggests. Be that as it may, the first man Adam was made a living soul. God formed man from the dust of the ground. We are made from minerals. We must also feed on what the earth produces, for we are of the same substance. We are simply presented as clay and moulded from it.

Genesis 2:7

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Man therefore does not have a soul, but is a soul. In the Old Testament the soul is used to designate man in general, who he is, his identity. It is also often the designation of the body and even of the dead body. The soul is therefore in large measure a material thing. Man became living because God breathed into him the breath of lives.

You must also bear in mind that the Old Testament says the soul that sins shall die. That immediately removes the idea that the human soul is immortal. Man is a soul and is mortal, but apart from that, if there is talk of dead souls, then you know that the soul is not immortal.

The first man Adam was therefore made a living soul. That is, incidentally, a very positive expression, for it can be defended that man has since then been a mortal soul, because afterwards he loses life again.

The first man Adam was made a living soul, and the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. When Paul speaks about Christ and about our situation in Christ, he immediately makes a comparison between Adam and Christ. He leaves out some words in the comparison. The full sentence should read: The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Man Adam was made a quickening spirit.

The spiritual is not first, but the natural is first, then the spiritual. It must be clear that these expressions do not merely refer to Adam and Christ alone, but that it is a general principle.

He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second (Heb. 10:9). This means that everything that comes first disappears to make way for what comes afterwards.

Everything that comes first is provisional and awaiting what would come afterwards.

Moreover, everything that comes first is in some way a foreshadowing (a type) of what

would come afterwards. In Hebrews it concerns the difference between the Old Testament sacrifices over against that one sacrifice that has now been offered by the High Priest of the New Covenant. In that context it says: He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. That immediately entails that the entire first Covenant is taken away to make room for the second Covenant, namely the New Covenant. This principle, however, applies not only to the Old Covenant but to this entire old creation. The Bible begins with God creating the heavens and the earth and ends more or less with new heavens and a new earth being seen. For the old heavens and earth no place was found any more. This applies also to man, of whom Adam was the head. He was the firstfruits of this old humanity. God takes away that first Adam to set in his place another Adam. That is an important principle and immediately reminds us that the statements made in Genesis about the Adam we know apply over his head to the last Adam, namely the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul draws on that here.

1 Corinthians 15:47

The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. They each have their own family. The first man lacked many things. That is connected with his being of the earth and therefore earthy. Over against him stands the last Adam Christ. The first Adam is therefore in some way a type of Christ. As we are all bearers of Adam's image, so the intention is that we should become bearers of Christ's image. The idea that the natural man is a bearer of God's image is widespread for obvious reasons, but it is not biblical. The natural man is in some way a foreshadowing of the second Man. He is the express image of God. God would take away the old man and set in his place a new Man.

In general people find it an uplifting idea that we are all bearers of God's image. That flatters human pride. We are moreover so attached to this life that we have and would rather not lose, that we hope God is interested in our life here and occasionally lends us a helping hand. That is a stubborn misunderstanding. The Bible says that this entire old creation passes away. Everything passes away, for God's purpose does not lie in this old creation but in a new one. The resurrection from the dead gives expression to this principle, whereby what would be buried, sown, would become living, but now belonging to the new creation, which in some way yet proceeds from that old creation. That is a wonder of God.

This is a central theme in the Bible. The old world is regarded as female in relation to God. This old creation is by nature barren. That is why many women in the Bible are barren. Not because that is normal, but because they serve a typological purpose in biblical history. By a wonder of God they are yet made fruitful. Ultimately this speaks of this old creation that would bring forth. That does not happen of itself, but requires God's intervention.

The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. That is the nature of this world in general, but it is also our nature. Our old life passes away and God will give us new life and develop that in us. In the resurrection that will be completed. We are on our way there.

Insects come into the world as larvae. They seem quite nice little creatures, but it is all temporary. That passes away. They pupate and later emerge, after which a completely different creature appears. That is the familiar story of the caterpillar and the butterfly, but in fact it plays a role with all insects. They first have a certain form with which they

can, so to speak, do little. That too is temporary and serves as a feeding ground for the ultimate creature that would be born and reproduce. And to think that there are scholars who claim that all this just arose that way, while it is so clear that there is a structure in it and that it is designed that way, after which the only remaining question is why it is designed that way, for what purpose. That is because it illustrates to us how it is with our life. We are but caterpillars, maggots, or whatever it may be. That, however, passes away, for the intention is that out of this old life God brings forth the new. That has been placed in it by God.

The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. In Adam was life. With a little goodwill you can make of that that Adam too was life-giving, for he reproduced and thus also brought forth life. The same applies to the last Adam. It is hard to say of Him that He reproduces, but that does not alter the fact that in Romans 5 two humanities are set over against one another. The one with Adam as head: that is the natural man. We all who belong to that have therefore received Adamic life. It comes from Adam and has Adam's characteristics, including sin and thereby also the corruptibility of that life.

Over against that stands a new humanity that does not have Adam but Christ as Head. We who are born again have received the life of Christ. Not by way of reproduction, for that is not how it is called, but yet because He has communicated His life to us. The Lord Jesus Christ was the First who received the promised Holy Spirit, and He has poured out that which ye now see and hear (Acts 2:33). That same Spirit was poured out. The Lord Jesus Christ was the First who received that Spirit and He gives that Spirit to everyone who believes. Spirit is another word for life. The Lord Jesus Himself received this new life, this spiritual life, this life that is spirit, and He gives it to everyone who believes in Him. That is why it is also called being born of the Spirit. Only if you do not know that the Holy Spirit is in fact the life of Christ does it become difficult to understand. We are born again, born of the Spirit, and thereby receive this spiritual life to which a spiritual body belongs.

For that purpose this old body is put off, so that the new may become manifest. Glory is then revealed. That term is linked to the resurrection body.

God hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3). In the resurrection of Christ life and immortality were brought to light (2 Tim. 1:10). He is the resurrection and the life. God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life (1 John 5:12).

That is why Paul can say that the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Not merely a living spirit. Adam received life and reproduced. From Christ onwards life is simply distributed to everyone who believes. He makes life, for that is apparently the thrust of such an expression.

Adam and Christ are continually set over against one another.

In Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive (v. 22). With regard to the body, that is to say, for we have already received new life in Christ. It always concerns the bodily resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:46

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

That is God's way of working. The first is temporary and the second is definitive. The Lord, for example, appointed Moses to redeem Israel. We know that Moses is a type of Christ. He therefore disappears and makes way for a Prophet like Moses who will definitively redeem in the future (Deut. 18:15, 18; John 1:45; Acts 3:22; 7:37). Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant, but the entire Old Covenant passes away and is replaced by a New Covenant of which Christ is the Mediator. Moreover, as regards religious matters, Aaron was the mediator of the Old Covenant, but he makes way for the second High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, who is the definitive High Priest. Under the Old Covenant we know as God's house first the tabernacle, but that was a tent, a temporary dwelling, which had to make way for Solomon's definitive temple. A temple is indeed built there, but then follows the Son of Solomon, who is more than Solomon. So that Solomon and his temple in turn make way for Christ, who would build the temple. To David it was said that a son would come forth from his body who would build the temple. We read several times that Solomon is that son. Yet we know that it was not fulfilled in him, but that this was only an example of how it would only be fulfilled in the true Solomon, in Christ Himself. Those promises received a fulfilment in the past, but not definitively. There would yet come a fulfilment, and that is definitive. That repeats itself time and again.

1 Corinthians 15:47

The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. The first man, that living soul from verse 45, is of the earth and therefore earthy. Man is pottery. You find that throughout the Bible. The whole of humanity is clay moulded into certain forms and for certain functions for God, who is described as the Potter. That is not only in connection with Israel but with the whole creation. Moreover, man is described as an earthen vessel.

2 Corinthians 4:7

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

This treasure is the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ.

Earthen vessels = this old corruptible life, our body, the old man.

In them God shines with His light.

An earthen vessel goes to water as long as it does not crack. Man fulfils a temporary function; afterwards it passes away. The Preacher speaks of a bowl that breaks (Ecclesiastes 12:6)

Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern). Man can also be a lamp that breaks. Lamps were originally a kind of earthenware jars with oil and a wick in them. That thing works for a while and then the fuel runs out. Archaeologists mainly find shards of pottery. As natural men we leave behind quite a lot of shards. That is nothing special; indeed, it is completely worthless.

Man is a vessel. The word vessel is connected with the word tool. All tools are designated as vessels, in the sense of utensils. If we are vessels, or tools, then evidently the intention is that we should be used. It appears that we have a choice in this, by whom we allow ourselves to be used, for there are two lords who present themselves for that purpose. You cannot serve both, however. That is also what these epistles are about.

The Corinthians were converted from idols so that they might serve the living God. Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. 6:20). We are His possession and should therefore serve Him.

Man is therefore an earthen vessel and amounts to very little. There is something else besides, for man is not only from the earth, but the Bible also emphatically says that in the sweat of his face shall he eat bread, till he return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return (Gen. 3:19). The form passes away, while the raw material in principle remains. All pottery returns to what it originally was: clay. Regardless of whether you are buried or cremated, you return to the earth. Even in burial the body passes into dissolution. That is also called burning, only much more slowly. Chemically it makes no difference; the result is the same. Man is taken from the earth and is incorrigible. That of course lies behind this sort of statement. If the material body returns to the earth, then that body is at any rate no longer there after the resurrection.

From these statements in Genesis 3 it is evidently clear that man is sinful precisely because he is earthy from the earth. How is it that man returns to the earth? Because he was taken from it. From that it follows that it is not so much that man fell into sin, but that the earth from which he was taken lies in sin. That thought runs counter to a number of fixed convictions, such as that we think natural laws are absolute and that the nature of nature is as it is and ought to be. As nature functions it is in principle good. But the Bible does not teach that. We live in a fallen world and are formed from a fallen world. It was intended beforehand that Adam would be temporary and that his so-called fall into sin was completely part of God's plan. That does not mean that God willed it so. The fall into sin forms part of God's plan. A good chess player sees what his opponent is going to do. He does not want his opponent to make certain moves, but he cannot prevent it and therefore takes measures in advance so that if his opponent does this or that, he can make a counter-move. God takes that fall into sin into His plan. There are things that happen, but you are prepared for them. Thus you know what to do about them and take into your plan the things that can or will go wrong.

For example: God wanted the Jewish people to come to repentance, but He also knew that it would not happen. With that knowledge in the back of His mind, He kept something in reserve so that He could yet fulfil His plan, but by another route. Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid (Rom. 3:3–4). God's plan is carried out as He made it. The disobedience of man was included in it, including that of the Jewish people. God has a purpose with that. Not because He willed it so, but if it is so, then He reckons with it and makes His plan. We human beings would do the same. If you have certain foreknowledge, you take it into account.

The first man is of the earth and therefore has earthly characteristics. Earthly characteristics mean that everything is of a temporary nature and therefore passes away. You can accomplish something on earth, but if you do not maintain it, you are soon rid of it. The first, the natural, the soulish—God takes that away. That is also His intention. He even takes away the whole earth. He would create new heavens and a new earth (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 20–21). The natural will disappear.

Over against the corruptible earthly stands the Lord. He is the second Man. From heaven appears to have been added. That makes no difference, for the thought itself is perfectly sound. That this has been called into question over time is only logical. Those who believe that the Lord is from heaven generally have great difficulty with His earthly

origin, with Christmas and His virgin birth. On the other hand there are people who gladly accept that He was one of us but want nothing to do with His origin from heaven. That in the course of time such a verse has been tampered with is therefore not surprising. Nevertheless, that it stands there does no harm to the whole. It is a logical contrast. The first man is of the earth, earthy, and the second Man is the Lord from heaven. If He were also of the earth—which can be defended via Mary—then you lose that contrast here and the statement is completely superfluous.

He is from heaven and He is the Lord. Some have difficulty with the idea that the Lord Jesus is the same as the LORD, namely Jehovah, from the Old Testament. That thought too is disputed. There is nothing strange about that, for all fundamental biblical truths are disputed. The devil sees to that.

The first man is of the earth, earthy, and the second Man is from heaven, heavenly. He has a different kind of life and apparently also a different kind of body. That is also evident from the following verse.

1 Corinthians 15:48

As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

The translators have inserted the little word is. That word is in fact superfluous in all those ancient languages. That word is simply not used because it is self-evident.

We say: Peace be unto you, but in the ancient languages it reads: Peace you.

In Latin they put the verb to be right at the end of the sentence. That is completely superfluous, for by the time you reach the end of the sentence you no longer need it. You already know what it is about.

Be that as it may, the translators have inserted it here, but if you start inserting, you have to insert more.

As is the earthy... what? The earthy man, of course.

As is the earthy man, such are also the earthy men.

As is the earthy, such are the earthy.

As is the earthy man, such are the earthy men.

As Adam was, such are all who descend from him.

It therefore says here that we are bearers of Adam's image. We are as Adam was.

Over against that stands:

As is the heavenly, such are the heavenly.

As is the heavenly Man, such are also the heavenly men.

As is the last Adam, such are also those who descend from Him. Those heavenly men are of course the believers. This therefore also means that we, by analogy with the earthy men who are bearers of Adam's image, should be conformed to the image of the last Adam.

Romans 8:29

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

That concerns us. We who have partaken of Christ are predestinated beforehand to sonship. That is formulated somewhat differently here, but the thrust is the same. We should be changed into His image. That is nonsense if we are by nature bearers of God's image. Then nothing needs to be changed.

In Hebrews 1:3 it is triumphantly said that Christ is the express image of God's subsistence. He is after all the image of God. Similar statements are found elsewhere. These things mean nothing if each of us were a bearer of God's image. That is not so, but Christ is. When God said in Genesis 1: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, that was fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ as Firstborn of a new creation. The creation of Adam was not definitive. He would disappear and in his place would come the definitive Adam. The creation of Adam was at any rate a demonstration of how it stands with this fallen world and what the consequence is if life proceeds from it and is continued. With that sinful world something is fundamentally wrong and that cannot be improved. That was fixed beforehand. Nevertheless we find illustrated in the history of salvation how God takes all sorts of measures to improve the old creation. For that He gave the law. That is religion and the improvement of the old man. That did not really have the purpose of improving that old man but of demonstrating that that old man is incorrigible. There is and was nothing to improve. Therefore something new must come. God makes something new out of this old creation, so that this old creation has yet had use. Great use, for if we had not first made our appearance in this old world, we could not have been born again and thus could not have part in that new creation. The earthy men are as the earthy man.

Genesis 5:1–3

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth:

Man is expressly a bearer of Adam's image. That is precisely the reason why he must yet be born again, because he must become a bearer of God's image. If God makes butterflies, they in no way resemble butterflies. They are caterpillars that do not in the least resemble a butterfly. Nevertheless they become one. That is how it is with us as well. That applies not only to spiritual things but also to the body.

As Christ is, such are also the heavenly men. We too shall be changed bodily, and that after His image.

Philippians 3:20–21

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Because our citizenship is in heaven, because our conversation is in heaven, because we are enrolled in heaven, therefore we also look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. We are therefore changed not only inwardly but also outwardly, with Him Himself as the standard. We receive a body like His body. That happens according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. The two heavens and the earth will disappear and be replaced by new heavens and a new earth. We receive a foretaste of that. As it will happen with the whole creation, so it will happen with us at the time of the rapture of the Church. We shall therefore bear the image of the heavenly Man.

1 Corinthians 15:49

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

We were bearers of Adam's image, at any rate bodily, but we shall receive a body like that of Christ, the heavenly Man. This must be so, for as long as we still form part of this old creation we cannot inherit.

1 Corinthians 15:50

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

Corruption = flesh and blood. Neither can inherit the kingdom of God. As long as we are wholly or partly corruptible we cannot inherit something incorruptible. As long as the Lord Jesus was here on earth (to die), He also objected to being called the Christ. He was not yet that. The Christ would inherit. The Messiah is the Son of David who would inherit that unshakable throne. As long as He Himself was in a mortal body, however, He could not inherit and could not be the Messiah. He would become that. That is what He believed, that is what we believe, that is also what the Bible says about it. When Peter said: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Lord Jesus said: Keep quiet. He said that many times. It stands about twenty-five times in the Gospels. They were not allowed to speak of it. That always concerns things directly connected with His Messiahship. It was not yet time. So it is actually also with us.

We are indeed born again, but that means we are saved in hope. There are also people who think that the purpose of this life is that we are born again and that that is it. They hope to achieve that in the future. In the Bible it is different. The purpose is not that we should be born again. The purpose is not that we should become children of God, but that we should become sons of God. To that end we are first born again and are therefore children of God. Afterwards we should grow up to sonship, or to adoption.

Romans 8:23

And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Romans 8:24

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

Adoption to sonship = appointment to the birthright and thus to the inheritance. That is the hope we have within us. God has begotten us again unto a lively hope, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. We are on our way to that adoption to sonship. We should submit to the upbringing that belongs to it. That is the thrust of this epistle to the Corinthians. They are babies, but they need not only milk but also solid food. Those Corinthians, however, do not want that, for they cling to this earthly life. They are oriented to the flesh, to the old man. They may also be focused on the improvement of the old man. It is not about that old man, however, but about the new. That should grow up to maturity.

We wait for that inheritance with patience. We wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. Those two things are connected. We must first be redeemed from this body. Only then can we be appointed to sons. Of course you can also say it the

other way round: The Lord will appoint us to sons; therefore He first redeems us from our body.

In practice it is one event. We shall be changed and put on immortality. We shall be clothed with immortality so that we may then inherit.

1 Corinthians 15:51

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; Both those who have fallen asleep and those who remain alive until the coming of the Lord. That is also how it is stated in 1 Thessalonians 4. Those who have died in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air

1 Thessalonians 4:16–17

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:52

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

In a moment = in the twinkling of an eye. Moment has the meaning of indivisible = atomos = not divisible. From one moment to the next, therefore. The dead will rise first, and then we who remain alive will be caught up with them. That is the moment when we shall be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:53

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Put on = the term for putting on clothing and thereby the expression for receiving another body. A body is regarded as a garment (see also 2 Corinthians 5:2–4

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life). This change of body is necessary before we can be appointed to sonship, in order to receive our inheritance.

The exposition begins in verse 51.

1 Corinthians 15:51

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; Behold, I shew you a mystery. It is an aspect of what is generally called the mystery. The mystery is a fixed term for the whole of God's work in relation to this present age. Our entire dispensation is regarded as a dispensation of the mystery (Ephesians 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ). The biblical principle is that everything to do with God's work between the first coming and the second coming of Christ is hidden. That was not revealed in the Old Testament. In other words, in the Old Testament you cannot find what the Lord would do in the days

between the sufferings that would come upon Christ and the glory that would follow (1 Peter 1:11

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow).

1 Peter 1:9–12

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

The prophets did indeed prophesy about the blessings we receive from God.

They searched into and inquired about their own prophecies in order to come to knowledge of them. It was therefore not lying on the surface in any prophecy, but if you make a little effort, you can yet find it in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, it is hidden therein.

Verse 11 is a little corrupted. The sentence should read: Searching into what and what manner of time the Spirit who was in them signified and testified beforehand of Christ, the sufferings of Christ and the glory after that.

From this it must at any rate be clear that the sufferings of Christ are described in the Old Testament, but certainly also the glory of the Messiah. The time that lies in between, however, is not discussed. How does the Messiah go from suffering to glory? That has everything to do with this present age, which begins with His resurrection. His sufferings go up to and including the cross. Officially not even the cross. For the princes of this world knew not, otherwise they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8

Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory). If they had known that He would rise from the other side of death and even as Firstborn of a new creation, they would have done everything possible to prevent His crucifixion. Somewhere there lies the boundary. For us, looking back, reading Psalm 22 is clear enough. There we find a description of the crucifixion and the events surrounding it. Texts from it are also quoted literally in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus Himself even quotes from Psalm 22. That psalm does not end with death but with resurrection. There is a prayer for deliverance from death, albeit in veiled terms, but it is indeed about deliverance from death.

Apart from that, Peter quotes Psalm 16 in Acts 2. Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption (Acts 2:27). Peter says of it that this was a psalm of David, but that he died and did see corruption. David was a prophet and spoke this in full consciousness about Christ, about the Son who would come forth from his body. Peter concludes therefore that Psalm 16 concerns the resurrection of Christ from the dead. What applies to Psalm 16 applies also to Psalms 22 and 23. They are words of the Lord Jesus Himself. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me. Those are words of the Lord Himself. That is evident from all those psalms. It

does not lie on the surface. You have to think about it. That is to say, you should search the Scriptures and compare Scripture with Scripture. Then these things prove to be hidden there, including truths concerning the Church, including the work of calling the Church in our days as a people of firstfruits, a people described as His reward. You find that under many terms in the Old Testament prophecies and symbolism. Those things lie hidden in it. The rapture of the Church also belongs to that. That too forms part of the mystery.

The prophets therefore searched into their own prophecies, particularly the time between the sufferings that would come upon Christ and the glory that would follow. That begins at any rate with His resurrection and then what follows after that. It also says further that they knew how it was.

1 Peter 1:12

Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

It did not concern them, but us. One of the aspects of that mystery is the rapture of the Church. Nevertheless, it is to be found in the Old Testament in a few scattered statements. Moreover, we of course also have the simple thought that the Old Testament speaks about Christ. That thereby also speaks about those who have part in Him. It therefore also speaks about the body of Christ. That is why sometimes sentences stand in the singular and then suddenly pass into the plural. It is first about the Righteous One and in the next sentence it suddenly concerns the righteous ones. That must at least bring it to mind. Is He then not alone? Who is the Messiah? Is it One Person? Yes, that can be demonstrated, but on the other hand those terms stand in the plural. Even the word Saviour stands in the plural. Saviours shall come up on mount Zion (Obad. 1:21). Of a Saviour we know that, but why saviours? That concerns the Church.

We do indeed find prophecies in the Old Testament about the ascension of Christ. Not necessarily about Ascension Day, but certainly about the Messiah at the right hand of God. On the one hand as Man, as Son of David. The Jews know that the son of David is the Messiah, but it has escaped them that He would also sit at the right hand of God. If the Messiah is then David's son, why does David call Him his Lord? (Mark 12:35–37). That is a reference to the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God. That is not on Ascension Day, but on the first Easter Day, at His resurrection from the dead. If that is said about Christ and we are in Christ, then that is therefore also a prophecy about the Church, which would be set with Christ in the heavenlies. He would be Firstborn among many brethren. That is what it concerns. That is a mystery.

1 Corinthians 15:51

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed;

1 Corinthians 15:52

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

In an indivisible moment. The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. It is written more slowly than it happens. It is from one moment to the next. We must get rid of the idea that at the time of the rapture of the Church we see the graves opening, just as you see a chick come out of an egg and that after a time

everyone is there and we shall then all go to the Lord together. That is not how it goes. It is from one moment to the next. So too was the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ in all probability. It is a radical event. Matter is in one stroke transformed from soul to spirit, from earthly to heavenly, from corruptible to incorruptible, from mortal to immortal. That is refinement indeed.

That will happen at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound.

Sound originally also means in English to produce sound, a powerful sound. Just like a finch's song. That is the sound a finch makes.

A powerful sound is also represented by a trumpet. Hence the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound.

People have observed that in Revelation there is a series of seven trumpets and think that the rapture coincides with the sounding of the seventh trumpet. That is a misunderstanding. That does not fit at all.

The trumpet already appears in the Old Testament. When on the feast of trumpets one must blow the trumpet, that is obviously not one of the seven trumpets from Revelation. Blowing the trumpet is in general a commanding signal. That is what it has been used for from of old. The trumpet was later replaced by the bugle. Those things are built to produce as clear and penetrating a sound as possible. They are used in the army. Signals are blown with them: Wake up, roll call, attention! and so on. The trumpet preceded that. That is natural, for it is a ram's horn, a shofar. That is described in the Old Testament, as are the signals that had to be given with it. In general the trumpet is a horn and thus a crown. After all, the ram was crowned with horns. The word for horn is the same as the word for crown: qeren. A horn in the Bible also stands for kingship; a shofar therefore also. When it says my horn shall be exalted, that means that the one speaking will receive a great kingdom.

The horn of salvation = the Messiah and His kingdom.

The sounding of the trumpet, the blast or the call of the trumpet is ultimately the voice, the command, of the king who speaks. The king commands and calls the people. In the Old Testament you read that the trumpet is blown when someone is made king. There is a new king and people should gather to that king and submit to him. The King par excellence is Christ Himself and the trumpet is the trumpet of God. The trumpet ultimately expresses the preaching and sounding of the Word of God. It is a call to come to Him and submit to Him, because He is now King, but also because it is war.

With the trumpet the army is gathered, again to submit to the king, but also as a call to battle, or because the kingdom must yet be established and even with military force. Here it is a matter of the sounding of the last trump, for the simple reason that this is the last time the Lord calls us. It is not the last of a series. He has called us; perhaps He calls you today for something, or in a few days. Moreover, He knows us, He calls us, we know His voice and we follow Him. The last time He calls is when His kingdom is about to break in. Then we shall indeed be gathered for battle. When He returns, we shall as His people be manifested with Him to judge the world with Him. The last time He calls us is the last trump and that is it. That is at the rapture of the Church.

Other Bible interpreters say that it would be derived from Roman militarism. There would then be three blasts on the trumpet. Then it is something like: On your marks, get set, go.

The last trump is that go, so to speak. This seems an unbiblical explanation.

As said, in Revelation we also find trumpets. They have the same thrust. Every time the trumpet sounds, the idea is that God speaks and then something happens. God speaks with power and then something occurs. Then follow all those so-called apocalyptic judgments as described in Revelation. He shall speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure (Ps. 2:5). That is the trumpet.

As far as we are concerned, we wait for that, for when the Lord speaks again, He speaks first to us and calls us as it were to Himself. He does that with great power. Everything God does He does by His Word. When He uses His power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself, then He speaks. God therefore also speaks with power at the time of the rapture of the Church. He calls us to gather us to Himself for the final war. That fits entirely with the biblical meaning of the trumpet.

At that time we shall be raised incorruptible and shall be changed to put on immortality. That must happen, for this corruptible must put on incorruption. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. We are on our way to the incorruptible and the immortal. That is, as far as we personally are concerned, the victory over the last enemy. Then death too is swallowed up in victory.

1 Corinthians 15:54

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Death is swallowed up in victory. That is a text from Hosea, completely torn out of its context. That matters little, however, for it concerns the principle, namely that death will be overcome. Death shall be no more, in the sense that it will no longer reign. In Hosea it concerns something quite different, but here it is applied to us for the future.

That is precisely where we are headed, and we are told so because it is our joyful hope. Whereas the Corinthians thought there was no bodily resurrection, Paul says that in that case we would not even be children of God at all. But we are to become sons of God, and for that this body must be changed. Our body remains our body, but it is transformed into something else. We do not know how that will technically take place. We only understand matter and know that it does not develop but rather dies off. That is how it is with everything in nature. Everything by definition breaks down. That is why evolution is such a mad doctrine. It is utterly absurd. Everything in nature dies off and falls apart. It never gets better of itself, only worse.

Paul says there is resurrection from the dead, there is new birth in Christ. The same thing that happened to Him with regard to His body will also happen to us. His body was changed, He rose from the dead, and the grave was empty. If you are not yet in the grave, do not worry, for we shall perhaps not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, from one moment to the next. What a day that will be!

The Bible generally speaks in other terms about the rapture of the Church. We are on our way to glory; we are called to glory; an inheritance awaits us in heaven; we are begotten again unto a lively hope; we are called unto salvation, and so on. There are many terms for it. We usually do not take those passages along but go looking for texts that speak of the rapture of the Church. Then we find two or three, after which it becomes quite easy to reason the rapture away. But that does not rid us of all those other passages that speak just as much about that same future expectation.

These things are directly connected with the coming again of Christ, but also with our inheritance. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. In other words, corruption does not inherit incorruption.

Inheriting the kingdom of God is something different from entering the kingdom of God. At the moment we come to faith we enter the kingdom of God. You enter the kingdom on the basis of new birth.

John 3:3

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

You must also be born again to inherit the kingdom of God, but that is another matter. Be that as it may, we know with absolute certainty that flesh and blood can indeed enter the kingdom of God, otherwise it could not be said to us that we should present our bodies (flesh and blood) a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God (Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service). Our bodies are regarded as having entered the kingdom with us. We have even entered as firstfruits. Those who enter the kingdom of Christ at His coming again and the revelation of His kingdom are flesh and blood. They are believing people, for otherwise they would not enter, but they have not yet been changed, and it is not yet the Last Day.

Corruptible flesh and blood, however, will not inherit that kingdom.

There is a difference. By faith you are born again and are saved. But we who believe and are children of God are called to adoption to sonship. This means we are on our way to the reward kept for us in heaven. The intention is indeed that man should first become a child of God, but also that he should then become a son of God. That is the real purpose. God is building His Church in this present age. That Church is by definition a Church of firstfruits and on that ground is indeed called to adoption to sonship. The Church is the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven (Hebrews 12:23)

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect). The Church is the ekklesia, those called out from the people to have part in the judgment and the functioning of the King.

The firstborn are not necessarily those who were born first, but those with the birthright. They are called the elders of the people, or also the princes of the people. They are those who are heads of the various families and appointed in that position.

In the days of Moses the council of elders was appointed, from which later Judaism under Judaism derived the Sanhedrin. In Hebrews 12:23 you find various terms to designate the Church, which also indicate what the Church is: firstfruits, elders, of that kingdom of which Christ Himself is the King. In the second place we belong to it, and in the third place Israel, in the days of the coming again of Christ. Of us it is said that we are written in heaven.

Rule 1 is that the firstborn belong to the Lord. They are to be offered. The Lord takes them to Himself. That is what happens collectively with the whole Church and will also happen bodily. We shall be promoted to heaven. Note well, this is the exception.

Throughout the history of salvation the rule is that believers will be raised on the Last Day and will live on the new earth. Man was made for the earth and the earth for man.

The exception is that the first to have part in the new creation and thus in the New

Covenant and in Christ will specifically be appointed to the service of God and thus receive a position in heaven. That is why the Church of today is a people of firstfruits. As long as we are on earth as children of God, we are children of God and therefore have nothing to say but empty notes. Children must be taught that life does not revolve around them. Children have no say. For that purpose they have parents. They have authority over their children. We as children of God therefore also have no say with God. He has a plan for our lives. He brings us up. What all that is for? One day we shall understand it with the Lord. Living by faith we trust the Lord on His Word. That is why we sing: Whatever the future may bring, may the Lord's hand lead me. We have no say in that. The more you have it in your own hands, the more you also bear the responsibility yourself.

We are children of God and He chastens us. That remains so as long as we are in the flesh. But there is a sequel to that being children.

1 John 3:1

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

We were to be called children of God one day. This verse connects seamlessly with John 1:12

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

You must understand that both passages of Scripture are spoken from an Old Testament standpoint. Those who in Old Testament times received Him were given power to become children of God one day. Later, when that would be possible. In Old Testament times that was impossible. New Testament times are not spoken of until verse 14.

John 1:14

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

This concerns His resurrection and thus New Testament times. Before that time people were not born again. Therefore they are also not firstfruits and do not go to heaven. They were believers before us, but they were not born again. They had not yet received the Holy Spirit. That could not be, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:39

(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.))John specifically points out that this was promised in Old Testament times.

In New Testament times, however, everyone who believes is born again on the spot and immediately, for the Holy Spirit is now present, because Jesus is glorified. God has raised this Jesus. He has given Him that Holy Spirit. Christ Himself gives that Spirit again to everyone who believes in Him (Acts 2:33

Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear).

1 John 3:1

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 1 John 3:2

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Now = by now, after all that has gone before.

Now, by now, we are children of God. That is a whole phase further.

In verse 1 newer translations add after that we should be called the sons of God, and we are. That should also be there, but in the KJV it has fallen away. Assurance that we are children of God has for centuries not been popular. You were not allowed to know it and you were not allowed to say it, and if it stood in the Bible, we took it out. That is what happened. It does not make much difference here that it is not in verse 1, for it is also in verse 2. Now we are children of God. That is our position.

Appear = phaneroō = to be manifested.

It has not yet appeared what we shall be. But yes, if you are now a child of God and will yet be something in the future, even if nothing else were said, you would still know what it is about. Children want to grow up, want to become adults. That is of course also the intention and that is of course what this is about.

What we shall be has not yet appeared, has not yet come to light, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him.

Colossians 3:4

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

To whom? To the world. We shall be like Him. We shall be manifested with Christ as the Son, as the heirs of the kingdom. At His coming again He comes to claim His kingdom on earth. We shall then be manifested with Him in glory, for we are firstfruits of His kingdom and therefore also claim that same kingdom. It is His inheritance, but ours too, because we have had part in every spiritual blessing in Christ in the heavenlies. We have become one plant with Him and members of His body. We form part of the same Church of which He is the Head.

That is only in the future. We are on our way there. As long as we are still on our way, we are still children here.

The same is of course also in the epistle to the Romans. There it says that we have been planted together with Christ (Romans 6) and should no longer live under the dominion of sin, no longer live under the dominion of the law (Romans 7), but live under the leading of the Holy Spirit, who leads us to our adoption to sonship. The Spirit we have received and who would lead us into all truth. That is why He is called the Spirit of truth. Here in Romans 8, however, He is called the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, Abba, Father!

Fatherhood, sonship, and birthright form part of the Mosaic law and are a type of this New Testament situation in which these things would be applied. That is why it is Abba, Father, in the same way as in Hebrews both Greek and Hebrew terms are used to designate the Church.

In Romans 8 it therefore concerns those things.

Verse 19 says that the creation waits with eager longing for the revelation of the sons of God. That is as it is described in Colossians 3:4, the revelation of Christ in glory, together with the Church. The creation waits for us. On closer inspection we also wait.

Romans 8:23

And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even

we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

We wait not so much for the revelation of the sons of God, but for our adoption to sonship, to which the Spirit of adoption from verse 14 would lead us. Why does God do nothing about the world? What are we waiting for? The waiting is for our adoption to sonship. In practice that is the rapture of the Church. The rapture of the Church is in practice nothing other than that we shall be appointed to sons, whereby we put off this mortal and put on the incorruptible. And when we have been appointed to sons, then the next point is that the world still waits for us to be revealed as sons of God. We are indeed with the Lord for ever from the rapture of the Church, but that does not mean we shall then have nothing more to do with the earth. We shall indeed concern ourselves with the revelation of the kingdom of Christ on earth. We shall from heaven here on earth establish that kingdom. It does not say for nothing that we shall be like the angels and it does not say for nothing that when the Jewish people come to repentance, this happens through our activity. Those things happen only after the rapture of the Church. In our days the Lord officially does not concern Himself with the world and the nations, but that situation changes after the rapture of the Church. Then the Lord will indeed concern Himself with the world, beginning with the Jewish people, with His own tribe. We too shall be involved there. That is in the seventieth week of Daniel. At the end of that we shall appear with Christ in glory.

The world waits for the revelation of the sons of God. For that occasion those sons must first be appointed as sons. They must receive a place in the inheritance, for they receive a share of the inheritance and certain responsibilities.

We shall all be changed and shall all receive a glorified body. How glorious it will be is still a question. Whether that body is clothed, or naked, or overclothed has everything to do with our manifestation before the judgment seat of Christ, at the time of the rapture of the Church. At that time we shall receive our inheritance and be appointed to sons. At any rate the Church is collectively appointed to sonship.

Then the corruptible is put off, for as long as we are corruptible we shall not inherit the incorruptible.

In 2 Samuel 7 a son is promised to David who would come forth from his body. The throne of that Son would not be shaken for ever. God would establish His throne. When the Lord appeared here on earth He did not even have a kingdom. They wanted to make Him king by force. The kingdom was not offered to the people, but the opposite happened, for they wanted to make Him king. The time for that, however, was not yet ripe. He would receive that kingdom, but as long as He Himself was here on earth in a mortal body, He would not receive that kingdom. That was technically also not possible, for then He would not have been better than David himself, for it concerns someone who would not die and would have endless life. He would receive that kingdom. That is the ultimate fulfilment of 2 Samuel 7.

Apart from that, the Bible teaches that the same prophecy applied to Solomon, but Solomon died. He was therefore not the definitive fulfilment of the prophecy. Thus we ultimately arrive, according to Matthew 1, at Jesus, called Christ. He is the definitive Heir in His resurrection from the dead. Not before. The same applies to us. We shall be kings, but not before that change of our body. We must first be redeemed from the corruptible in order to receive something incorruptible and therefore inalienable. For

you cannot receive something for all eternity if you yourself eventually give up the ghost after a time.

What on the one hand is called our adoption to sonship can on the other hand be called the redemption of our body, as Romans 8:23 also indicates. Those things are inseparably connected. We are appointed to sonship at the redemption of our body. Not at our death. The idea is that of a birth. Hence we groan within ourselves, just as the whole creation does. We are not on our way to death, any more than the creation is, but to new life. The redemption of our body does not mean that we die, but that we receive another body, a new and glorified body and thereby new life.

2 Corinthians 5:1

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 Corinthians 5:2

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

This too does not concern our physical death but the redemption of our body. It is not about putting off the old but putting on the new. Once it reaches that point and the rapture takes place, this earthly tabernacle is as it were broken and changed into a glorified body. Our physical death redeems us from our earthly position, but the Church as a collective waits for glorification in the future, at the time of our manifestation before the judgment seat of Christ.

If you die before the rapture of the Church, where do you remain in the meantime, and where do all those brothers and sisters who have gone before us remain? You really need to go back further first and ask where all those Old Testament believers are now. They too must wait and do so not on earth. The Bible says the Lord cares for them. How? No idea. That withdraws itself from our imagination. They are in the realm of the dead and wait for the Last Day. For believers after the resurrection of Christ it is somewhat different. They too must wait, but not until the Last Day, but until the rapture of the Church. Moreover, they do not go to the realm of the dead, but nor do they go to heaven, for they were already there and nothing changes about that when this body no longer functions. They therefore do not go to heaven, for the simple reason that they were already there, but they do disappear from the earth. When you definitively close your eyes, they open up there above. We shall not see death, even though we may have died. That is not because we then sleep and therefore see nothing at all. That is namely the doctrine of so-called soul sleep. Apart from the fact that there is nothing to it, the expression is also incorrect. We are set in heaven and nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, not even death. We are raised with Christ and have become new creations with Him. The idea that laying aside this body could have a negative influence on that is absurd. It is the other way round. The death of this body means we are freed from bonds. According to the Bible that is regarded as a deliverance and redemption. Dying is called being loosed. This body binds us to a corruptible world.

Moreover, we are promised that this body will be changed. That is the ultimate redemption, the third and final phase of our salvation. It is not something inevitable but something promised to us. It is the fulfilment of God's promises. Our citizenship is in heaven, and therefore we look for the Saviour, who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body (Philippians 3:20–21

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord

Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself). In short, we look for adoption to sonship. That corresponds to the redemption of our body and thus...

Romans 8:24

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

Romans 8:25

But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. With submission. We let ourselves be led by it.

Romans 8:26

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

The thrust of the verse is completely identical to verses 14 and 15, namely that the Spirit leads us to that adoption to sonship. That is not something we can do ourselves because of our weaknesses, but the Spirit Himself comes to the help of our weaknesses. Moreover, we are bound to the love of Christ (vv. 35, 39). You therefore need not worry about it, but it is something we undergo. Hence patience. That has to do with forces greater than ourselves driving us somewhere.

Back to 1 Corinthians 15.

We should receive incorruption and put off corruption. The description of that is called a mystery. That is connected with what is generally called the dispensation of the mystery, for everything God does in our present dispensation, from the first coming of Christ to His coming again, is described as mystery. This means it concerns matters not revealed in the Old Testament. Those matters are sometimes mentioned in the Old Testament, but not in such a way that you would immediately recognise them when you read them in the Old Testament.

A nice example about the rapture of the Church is found in Isaiah 57.

Isaiah 57:1

The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.

Isaiah 57:2

He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.

Isaiah 57:3

But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore.

These are rather mystical statements. If you read this as it stands, you have no idea what it is about. This also cannot be placed in any way within Old Testament context. You encounter that phenomenon quite often in the prophets. That is because many prophetic statements concern the coming again of Christ, but at the coming again of Christ the Church is of course also involved, yet the Church itself is regarded as part of this mystery. That means you do not read explicitly about it in the Old Testament. You must know the New Testament to recognise these things in the Old Testament. That is

why the New Testament so often refers to Old Testament passages. These verses from Isaiah 57 are not quoted in the New Testament, but you should recognise them.

The righteous perisheth = disappears.

No man layeth it to heart = no one comes to faith because of it. No one takes it to heart.

To lay to heart is in Deuteronomy 30 already to come to faith. Among the Gentiles thou shalt return to lay it to heart and turn unto the LORD thy God and obey his voice (Deut. 30:1–2). For with the heart man believeth.

A righteous one therefore perishes and no one lays it to heart. The merciful men are taken away = they disappear, without anyone considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. The thrust is of course the same as in the first part of the sentence.

First it is called the righteous; then it is only one. Afterwards it is the merciful men, in the plural, and in the third instance it is simply again the righteous who is taken away.

In the light of the New Testament it should be clear that it concerns the Church. The Church is but one and therefore the righteous in the singular. Of course you can apply it to the Lord Jesus Himself, to His ascension, for He disappeared, but the alternation between singular and plural actually points to the fact that those many form a unity, just as the Church consists of many members but is a unity. Thus regarded, the rapture of the Church is described here. It says that it has no further influence on the course of events in the world. At any rate not in a positive sense and in general.

The righteous shall enter into peace. They shall rest in their beds, every one walking in his uprightness, corresponding to righteousness and merciful men. Then in verse 3 and following comes the counterpart. It concerns the rapture of the Church and thereafter God's dealing with Israel, beginning with the Jewish people, which runs into the 3½ years of the great tribulation of the seventieth week of Daniel. Then God reckons with the Jewish people and afterwards with the rest of Israel.

The Church disappears from the earth and as far as the course of events on earth is concerned, God concerns Himself from that time with Israel.

If you do not have the New Testament, these are inexplicable words. The same applies, for example, to the words of Isaiah 62.

Isaiah 62:5

For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

- A schematic summary of Isaiah 62:5 – Fourfold Parallelism

“For as a young man marrieth a virgin,

so shall thy sons marry thee:

and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride,

so shall thy God rejoice over thee.”Structure – Four parallel lines laid out vertically

Line 1: As a young man marrieth a virgin

Line 2: so shall thy sons marry thee

Line 3: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride

Line 4: so shall thy God rejoice over thee
Vertical alignment showing the fourfold progression

Position	Groom figure	Bride figure	Action / Relation
1	young man	virgin	marries
2	thy sons	thee (plural)	marry
3	bridegroom	bride	rejoiceth over
4	thy God	thee (plural)	rejoice over

Key identifications (who is who?)

- Virgin / bride / thee = Israel (the people/nation addressed in Isaiah 62)
- Young man → thy sons → bridegroom → thy God = progressive revelation of the same ultimate figure

Step-by-step addition / unfolding of meaning

1. Literal start: A young man marries one virgin (ordinary human marriage picture)
2. Shift to plural: thy sons (many) marry thee (Israel as one entity)
→ From one-to-one → many-to-one
3. Elevated title: The bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride
→ Marriage picture now carries joy / covenant love
4. Final identity: thy God rejoiceth over thee
→ The “bridegroom” is God Himself (Messiah / Christ)

Theological conclusion drawn from the parallelism

- The Bridegroom = Christ / God (the Lord who rejoices over Israel)
- Thy sons = the sons of the bride = believers who proceed from Israel (remnant / faithful Israel)
- Together Christ + the sons/believers = the full Bridegroom (Head + Body)
- Therefore the Church is not the bride, but members of the Bridegroom’s body (Christ + Church as one corporate Groom)
- When the Bridegroom (Christ with His Church) comes, Israel (thee / the bride) will be rejoiced over in the New Covenant marriage relationship.

Simple diagram of the relationship

Old Testament picture → God (Husband) + Israel (wife)

↓ (marriage ended through unbelief)

Future fulfilment → Christ (Bridegroom) + Church (sons / body)

↓ (together form the full Groom)

→ rejoices over restored Israel (the bride)

Isaiah 62:5 reveals Church truth in the Old Testament:

The Church is not a substitute bride replacing Israel.

The Church is joined to Christ as members of His body, forming the corporate Bridegroom who will rejoice over redeemed Israel in the days of the New Covenant. This fourfold structure progressively unveils the Messiah + Church as the ultimate rejoicing Bridegroom over Israel — a beautiful example of synthetic/emblematic parallelism pointing forward to New Testament reality.

The Church is mentioned in an even more difficult construction in verses 11 and 12.

Isaiah 62:11

Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the

daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

Isaiah 62:12

And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.

In Isaiah 49:4 you can already read that the Church is the reward of Christ's labour.

He comes with His reward. Not with our reward, or to pay out our reward, but with His own reward, with what He has acquired. That is the Church, which is not only His reward but also His inheritance (Ephesians 1). Salvation = Yeshua = Jesus. Behold, Jesus comes! He comes with His whole Church.

They shall call them the holy people. That reward therefore indeed consists of a plurality. Both they and them are plural, so that here Israel stands over against the Church.

This stands in the Old Testament, but we only understand these things after they have been revealed to us in the New Testament. That is how it is with the mystery. The various aspects of it are also called mysteries. Together those mysteries form the mystery. Thus you have the mystery of the partial hardening of Israel, but also the mystery that we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. 1 Corinthians 15:51

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed;

1 Corinthians 15:52

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:53

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

1 Corinthians 15:54

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

We are called soldiers of Christ and are involved in the battle against the principalities and powers in the air. That is every day. Thus in fact every day the trumpet is sounded that calls to that battle. We are called to draw near to the throne of grace. That call is nothing other than the sounding of the trumpet. When that trumpet sounds for the last time, we are caught up to meet the Lord in the air and then we shall certainly draw near to His throne. We shall then also be for ever with the Lord and therefore the trumpet need sound no more. If trumpets still sound afterwards, that is because we sound them, in the days of the coming again of Christ and in connection with those seven trumpets from Revelation. That concerns a judgment upon living humanity. We shall judge the world with Christ.

The body is regarded as a garment, a piece of clothing. It is the outward, that which is seen. We are now clothed with corruption, but in the future we shall be clothed with incorruption, which means we shall receive an incorruptible body.

That, as far as believers are concerned, is the end of the earthly course in this world.

The Corinthians thought they had to get one thing and another settled here on earth and in this life. Paul says that has absolutely no value, because it disappears anyway. The fashion of this world passeth away. We look not at the things which are seen, but at the

things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

When our bodies are changed into incorruption, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory.

When this happens, we are completely free from this fleshly and earthly. It is all of a temporary nature, so why worry about this world? That is not necessary at all, for we are on our way to something else. When we are redeemed from our body, then this mortal with all the problems attaching to it is definitively over. This is the approach from the negative side.

The positive side is illuminated in 2 Corinthians 4 and 5, for when all this has happened, then we are glorified. If all is well, then we have received reward, which for those Corinthians is still to be seen. They shall receive a heavenly and therefore glorified body, but how glorious that will be is still a question. To all appearances they have squandered rather a lot of that inheritance. John says: Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward (2 John 1:8). Paul calls in the last verse to be steadfast in the work of the Lord, because their labour is not in vain in the Lord. Thereby it is cautiously brought forward that where one serves the Lord, lets oneself be led and chastened, one shall indeed receive reward for it. That is the intention for all believers.

2 Corinthians 4:16

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

The inward man is not the stomach. On the contrary, the outward man is the stomach, the belly. As a joke the expression strengthening the inward man has come in, but it is to be feared that a generation later no one will know any more that this was a joke and will take that expression seriously. The inward man is the invisible man. The belly belongs very emphatically to the outward man. The inward man is the spirit, the heart, the mind, the understanding.

2 Corinthians 4:17

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

2 Corinthians 4:18

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The things which are not seen are eternal and therefore also have eternal value. Here it speaks about the practical walk of the believer.

This section begins with: For which cause we faint not = therefore we do not faint. We have become ministers of the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life), not of the law but of grace. Not of the ministration of death, for we do not serve the law. We are ministers of the grace of God. Therefore Paul says...

2 Corinthians 4:1

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

Because we are ministers of the New Covenant, we faint not. We do not faint or fail and do not let ourselves be hindered, for we shall be rewarded for it. That is the promise we have received.

2 Corinthians 5:1

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Our earthly house of this tabernacle = our earthly body, our tent in which we dwell. A tent is a temporary dwelling.

A building of God = a definitive house, not made with hands. This whole visible world is regarded as made with hands, formed. The creation is the work of His hands and is therefore made with hands. Here it concerns a house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens. That is a house that will not be broken. The body in which we now dwell is temporary and therefore corruptible, but in its place we receive a body that is eternal and therefore incorruptible.

Because a new chapter begins here, one might think that this concerns our death, but that is not so. It concerns the rapture of the Church. It concerns us who remain alive.

2 Corinthians 5:2

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

We are on our way to our appointment to sonship. We expect that and that is our hope. We are on our way there and meanwhile we groan, we sigh. That is regarded as the groaning of the woman in labour who brings forth. She is in travail and groans. That applies to us also, for we too are saved in hope. We do not expect to die, although that may perhaps happen, but we expect that inheritance. We expect to receive another body. That body is not merely regarded as a garment but even as overclothed. That means more glory.

Afterwards there is immediately a deduction. Paul says namely that the intention is that we should be overclothed, but it may very well be that we shall be found naked.

2 Corinthians 5:3

If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

Our life as a child of God here on earth is decisive for the measure in which we shall receive glory. That expresses itself in our appearance, in our body, in our dwelling. It is imagery and it remains imagery, but you can thus well imagine what you should picture by it. On another occasion you read that one received ten cities and another five cities and yet another received nothing at all. That has to do with kingship and dominion. One kingdom is also more glorious than another.

Kingdoms in antiquity were in principle cities. If you read the division of the land of Canaan under Joshua, it is counted. Each tribe received a number of cities. That is all described at length. That must surely have a meaning, you would think.

Be that as it may, there is difference in glory. In 1 Corinthians 15 that difference is compared with the difference in glory between sun, moon, and stars and between stars among themselves (v. 41). So also is the resurrection of the dead. Nothing more is said there. Here in 2 Corinthians 5 it says that if you do not inherit, you stand rather in your shirt. Not even that really, for then you shall be found naked. You can, however, also be clothed and even overclothed.

2 Corinthians 5:4

For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we

would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

We certainly do not want to go backwards. On the contrary! We want to be overclothed. That mortality might be swallowed up of life. Thus the mortal becomes the prey of the immortal, of life. The idea is that the new life as it were eats up the old life. Not merely in the resurrection so that afterwards the old is no more, but already in our life here. It is as John said of the Lord in John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease.

The same principle applies also to us. He must grow in us, take form in us, whereby our old life would pass into the new.

Paul says in Philipians 3 that he counted all things he had in the old life loss for Christ's sake, that he might win Christ. That does not alter the fact that the things he had received from home he afterwards used in his further ministry. It has become part of it there. Not 100%, for part of it was really unusable. You must not, so to speak, throw the baby out with the bathwater. The Lord wants to use us. You can indeed say that you give up everything for Jesus, but on the other hand the Lord wants to use you to be a ray of sunshine, to quote a few lines from a couple of songs.

We groan in this earthly body and long to receive that inheritance and be appointed to sonship. We do not want to lose what we have laboured for.

2 Corinthians 5:5

Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

That corresponds to 2 Corinthians 3:4–6. Our sufficiency is of God, who has made us able ministers of the new testament. He who has wrought us for this very thing is God. He has also given us the earnest of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the earnest of our future inheritance (Ephesians 1:14

Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory). The Spirit leads us to our inheritance and therefore the Spirit is called the Spirit of adoption to sonship. That is the function of what is emphatically presented to us in the Bible as the Holy Spirit. That is Christ and that is the High Priest of the New Covenant. He brings us to that inheritance. The fact that we have received the Spirit is a guarantee to us that we shall also indeed be appointed to sonship. With this understanding, that we should also let ourselves be led by that Spirit and that we should also trust in Him, in all sincerity and in all surrender to it.

For some this is a frightening preaching, namely that we and our works will in the future be judged by the Lord, that there will be a judgment upon our lives. They are afraid of it and look forward to it with dread. There will doubtless be a reason for that. Sometimes rightly so, for the Bible has very hard statements about it. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, or: Our God is a consuming fire. Those are not statements in connection with unbelievers but with believers. How much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:29). That is indeed a serious message. On the other hand, it need not be frightening. Our new birth is the beginning of our upbringing as children of God, on our way to our adoption to sonship. In that you are no exception, for that is what the Lord does with each one of us. He brings us up. For

that purpose we have received the Spirit and that Spirit leads us to adoption to sonship. He will lead us into all truth and thereby to our adoption to sonship. That is why for a child of God faith in the truth is also a first requirement.

2 Thessalonians 2:13–14 ...

that God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is precisely the same thing. God hath from the beginning chosen us to salvation in sanctification of the Spirit. Sanctification is the equipping for service to God under the New Covenant. That sanctification takes place through belief of the truth. That is why the Spirit is also called the Spirit of truth, for He shall guide us into all truth. And because that sanctification must lead to glory, the Spirit is therefore also called the Spirit of adoption. These are different terms denoting exactly the same thing.

Returning to 2 Corinthians 5.5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

The cross-references under this verse point us to Romans 8:16;

2 Corinthians 1:22

Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Ephesians 1:13

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Ephesians 4:30

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

The Spirit therefore leads us towards that adoption. He leads us into all the truth. In this we are to be instructed and changed in the inner man.

6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

Because the Spirit leads us and we have received the Spirit as earnest, we always have good courage—unless we draw back unto perdition. But we are not of those who draw back unto perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul (Hebrews 10:39). If you draw back from the truth and thus from the working of the Spirit, then you have every reason to dread our appearing before the judgment seat of Christ. Nevertheless, we always have good courage.

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

We look forward to our future. It can only get better.

9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

It is inevitable. He will judge us. This takes place at the same time as in verse 1, namely when the house of this tabernacle is dissolved. That is therefore not at our death, but at the rapture of the Church.

The good is when you have walked in accordance with the New Covenant, and the bad is, of course, when you have walked as a servant of the Old Covenant, that of the letter and of the law and of death.

11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. We know that we shall be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ and that we can suffer loss there. Therefore we persuade men to faith. Not only that they might come to faith, but above all that they might live by faith. So that those who live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again (verse 15). So that Christ Himself, and thereby the Word of God, might take form in us. We shall be rewarded for this. It is Paul's ministry to preach these things. And so he does. That is why he repeatedly says that we should not delay.

Returning to 1 Corinthians 15.

This corruptible must put on incorruption. When that has happened, then the saying shall come to pass as it is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. It was speaking of resurrection in general, and then in particular of the resurrection of the Church, as part of the mysteries. Paul argues that we must first have put on incorruption, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. It is not simply that we shall receive a new body and that is that. Nor shall we all receive the same body, as in some socialist ideal. If that were so, it would mean that our lives here have no significance whatsoever. There are plenty who think that now they believe, they are saved and can just carry on living as they please, because we shall die and in the resurrection we shall all be equal. They probably have a personal interest in that idea and hope to get it arranged that way. But they can forget it, for in that way our lives would be meaningless. Some indeed have an interest in that, because in practice they prefer not to serve the Lord and would rather not spend time on it. They prefer to live according to the old man, including all the theorising—for that too is according to the old man, including the invention of all sorts of new theories. They live by the motto once saved, always saved. That is true enough, but of course that does not say everything. The New Testament preaching is precisely preaching to regenerate people. That preaching is an exhortation indeed to serve the Lord in the practice of life.

We as the Church are not merely a collection of regenerate people who will one day go to heaven or something similar, but we are the people of God. We are His chosen people. Even more, we are the firstfruits of that people of God. We have received the birthright, which includes kingship and priesthood. As the people of God we have passed from darkness into His marvellous light, that we should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9). We, who were once Lo-ammi, have become His people.

The Jews are not the chosen people of God, but the Church. That, however, brings responsibilities with it, namely that we should keep and preach His Word. Unto us are committed the oracles of God. That last applied to the Jewish people (Romans 3:1–2), but they stumbled and fell. Therefore salvation has come to the Gentiles. In practice that is the Church. The Church is now therefore the chosen people of God. The church has most certainly taken the place of Israel. And because the Church is responsible for the truth, the church is Israel. That is a title.

Our life therefore matters. The question is then to what extent we pursue the truth. In Ephesians 4 it says that we grow up by speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15 But

speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ). Pursuing the truth is no side issue, or a matter for a few among us, but it is a matter for the Church. We are expected to keep the Word and thus to handle and apply it, to preach and to teach. All activity within the work of the Lord should be directed to that end. That does not mean that everyone must be actively involved in preaching, but that the total activity of the Church is directed to it.

Under the Old Covenant the priests did that work. They had help from the other members of their tribe (Levi), but besides that the whole of Israel was responsible for it. The whole of Israel therefore contributed (also materially) for the Levites, then for the priests, and then for the High Priest. That is the hierarchy, also in the Church. We are that people. As soon as we come to faith, God begins a good work in us, which He will perform until the day of Christ and thus until the moment of the rapture of the Church. That is our appearing before the judgment seat of Christ.

We shall be changed. That is necessary for our future. For this old creation must be replaced by a new one, not only spiritually but also materially.

When that has happened, then what is written is fulfilled, which you can already read in the Old Testament: Death is swallowed up in victory. You do not come across such statements very often, but they are there. Paul first quotes from Isaiah 25. There it says above: A feast of fat things for the peoples on Zion. A feast is in any case an expression of fellowship and unity, and in particular it is therefore a picture of the New Covenant and through the New Covenant even of a whole new creation and thereby of the fully accomplished and revealed Kingdom of Christ. That is described here. In that connection verse 8 then says of the Lord of hosts = the Messiah...

Isaiah 25:8

He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

Swallow up = devour.

This ultimately concerns a new creation, but it must be said that we who are in Christ are already a new creation. Nevertheless, this also applies to the physical. All that is mortal and perishable, subject to death, will disappear. It will not simply be done away with, although it is then gone, but it has been taken up into the new. This also means that it has contributed to the new.

The creation has been groaning in travail until now. From that you can deduce that creation is female. A new creation will be brought forth. You wonder who the begetter of it is. Who is the man? God Himself, of course. The great biblical idea is that God is the Man and creation the woman, who came forth from Him. The Man places His seed in her. That is the seed of regeneration. The intention is that that seed bears fruit, so that out of the woman, out of creation, a new creation is brought forth. After that the woman disappears. That is why childbearing is a dangerous occupation. That is connected with God greatly multiplying the sorrow of her conception. The idea is that the function of the woman is only to bring forth for the man. The function of the woman is to produce offspring, a son, an heir. She does that for the man, under the motto: She bare him a son. When that has happened, the woman dies. That is to say, this old creation then disappears.

Here too you can say that the old creation expresses itself in some way in the new. This great picture is also applied on a smaller scale. Our old nature is female. It is part of

creation. We receive from God His Word. That is the seed of regeneration. That seed is planted in us and in us it bears fruit, such that out of our old nature the new is born. That new nature is born and brought forth at the expense of the old. Just as the embryo is nourished by the mother's body, so it is with the new man. It is nourished from the old. And so we groan within ourselves, for not only creation brings forth, we ourselves do too. It is the same picture, but on a smaller scale. When the new has been brought forth, also physically, then indeed the old disappears. Hence in Revelation 20 you read that the old heavens and the old earth were no more. I saw new heavens and a new earth. The old is no more. It has had its function.

That is the great theme in the Bible. This old creation is not what God would make. He would make new heavens and a new earth (see also Isaiah 65 and 66). Where is that new creation that I would make (Isaiah 66:1)? Implying that God had already promised it beforehand. If you search in your Bible for where that is, you cannot find it and so, when God spoke about this world, He was not speaking about this world, but about what He would make. About an earth that would be ruled and managed and subdued by a Man who would be God's image and likeness. We apply that to the first Adam, but the Bible implies the second Adam. In advance, therefore, Genesis 1 speaks of that new creation.

We humans are in the larval stage. That is a temporary form. Soon everything will be different. That is illustrated in nature. This old passes away and in its place comes something new. The Lord does have an interest in that old, but only because it must contribute to the new that will be made. God, so to speak, has no interest in the caterpillar, but in the butterfly. To get that butterfly, the caterpillar must of course be cared for. So it is with the old man. Insofar as He blesses us according to earthly standards, it is so that fruit might be borne for Him.

In any case, however much the Lord may bless us here on earth, that passes away. Under all circumstances that is said to be a comfort.

Hosea 13:14

I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

These things are also quoted by Paul in the following verse.

1 Corinthians 15.55

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

These things are therefore fulfilled in the rapture of the Church. In Hosea it is applied in a limited sense, but Paul says here that the expression applies in general. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Then death no longer reigns. Insofar as something has come into it that does not belong, it is removed. In the new creation there is no more death, nor mourning, nor crying. Death is swallowed up in victory. 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'

These are rhetorical questions.

Grave = hades = realm of the dead. The expression implies that in this old world death always wins. In general, all life in this world is marked by the struggle against death and corruption. The struggle for existence, it is called. All human activity is merely directed at overcoming death. That will not succeed. That is why everyone is so busy. Not only

people—the animals too. Even if you cannot maintain your own life, it must somehow be propagated. That amounts to the same thing: maintaining life.

Moreover, everything our hands make we must also maintain and care for, otherwise it too passes from us. If you always leave your bicycle outside, it quickly rusts away.

Everything passes away and death has the victory.

But soon a new creation comes, but before that death will be destroyed. That is why it is asked: Death, where is thy victory? It is no more.

The sting of death is also no more.

A sting = a goad.

Formerly, men used a goad to make the ox walk forward. That goad sets the beast in motion. The goad that activates death is sin, says the following verse.⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

Not only is death no more in the new creation, but sin is no more, nor the law either.

That makes logical sense too, for we are delivered from death, from sin, and from the law. The sting of death has been removed, and thus the victory of death as well. Sin

activates death—yes, that was already stated in Genesis 3:19. It was even stated earlier, for in the day that man should eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would surely die. In other words, the wages—the reward—of sin is death.

The strength of sin is the law. The idea is indeed that sin goads, activates, death, but on the other hand, sin itself is activated by the law. The law activates sin, and sin activates death. Now you might say that before Moses there was no law, yet people still sinned and died. However, the prohibition against eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was also law. Eating from that tree is in itself a transgression of the law, while eating from the tree is itself a picture of life under the law. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the law. So the law does indeed play a role already in Genesis.

People think that the law has the power to combat sins. Idealistically considered, that may be true, but the Bible teaches that in practice the law does not work that way and has precisely the opposite effect. That runs counter to all philosophy on the matter.

Philosophy says that man needs law. After all, you must know how to live. The Bible says that the law promotes sin. One of the arguments for this is rather amusing: if there is no law, you cannot transgress it either. If there is law, it is guaranteed to be transgressed, and thus you have more sins. In fact, it is far more fundamental, for the law puts the idea into man's head. There are also statements in the Bible that describe this.

Romans 3:20

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

The knowledge of sin is the practical consequence of the law. Through the law one comes to know sin—not sins, but sin. Through the law you become aware of the sinful nature. The law does say: Do not do this, do not do that, do this, do that, but in practice it proves that man is not able to keep it. From this it becomes evident that man is by definition a sinner. Not that he commits sins, but that it is his human nature to transgress the law.

Romans 4:15

Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

Wrath = judgement. The law brings judgement with it. Where there is law, there are transgressions. Judgement comes upon the transgressions. That is applicable too in the

UK. For example, you may not run a red light. If you do and you are caught, you are condemned and fined.

If there is no law forbidding running red lights, and you run a red light, then there is no transgression and thus no judgement.

Romans 5:12

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

From the fact that all men die, it must be concluded that all men are therefore sinners, for death is caused by sin. In fact, this comes through the sinful nature of man. Through that sinful nature man dies. That in itself is already sin, for thereby one misses the purpose of life, namely to live.

Romans 5:20

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

Through the law sin has abounded. The law causes sin to increase. Through those multiplied transgressions, the grace of God also becomes greater. We as the Church are called to a demonstration of God's grace. The greater sinners we were, the greater the grace is too. Think of that sinful woman who anointed the feet of the Lord Jesus (in other versions His head). That was in the house of Simon the Pharisee. He thought to himself whether Jesus knew who that woman was who anointed His feet. If He knew, He would probably not allow it. Then the Lord said that the one who is forgiven most is probably also the most grateful. That applied literally in any case to that woman. That is what it is about. We should honour the Lord. Our lives should be to His glorification. The fact that our sins had become so much more abundant can still be used very positively. That is not to say that the intention is to sin as much as possible. Man is already lost anyway, so it does not make much difference. You are already guilty of death. No matter how often you transgress the law, that does not change. The death penalty is the death penalty; you cannot get it several times. Well, officially perhaps, but not in practice.

We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God, but are justified freely by His grace through Christ Jesus. And where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

Romans 5:21

That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sin reigns unto death. That is also the result of the reign of sin, but sin itself is activated by the law.

Romans 7:7 -8

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

Through the law is the knowledge of sin.

Sin finds its occasion in the law. There is a simple explanation for that. The law is laid upon the flesh. The law itself is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin (a slave to sin).

Romans 7:13b

that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

The law causes man to sin exceedingly. If there were no law, we would still sin, but not as much as when there is a law.

The law activates the flesh, but since the flesh is by definition sinful, the flesh then sins. If you activate an apple tree, it bears apples. If you activate a sinner, he bears sins. The man who is continually confronted with the law is continually confronted with sin.

Thereby the law reigns, but also sin and thus death. That is not the fault of the law, for the law is holy, just, and good. On the other hand, the law is powerless and unprofitable. The law is spiritual, but laid upon the flesh and therefore powerless. It will not work.

Galatians 3:19

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

It was because of transgressions, and thus transgressions increase.

The expression because of in the KJV is rather controversial. It is a somewhat difficult term, but the idea is certainly that sins would increase under the law. If there is one sin that increases under the law, it is that of unbelief. The general thought in the New Testament is therefore that the Jewish people did not come to faith because they lived under the law. That prevents them from coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Their whole way of life is determined by law, whereas the Gospel is the preaching of the opposite, namely grace. Those two things really do not tolerate each other. That is true wherever law determines life. Then you quickly arrive at religion, for religion is by definition law. Religion prescribes. Religion binds. That is also the meaning of the word. Where law reigns, there is no room for grace. Whoever therefore wishes to live from the abundant riches of God's grace must forget the law. That is precisely what we are delivered from. If we do not live under the law, that makes a great difference in practice with regard to sins. Only grace changes man. His thinking changes thereby, and his view of life. As for sins themselves, you shrug your shoulders at them. That takes care of itself. We do not thereby think lightly of sins in the life of the Christian, but the life of the Christian should not be directed at combating sin, however desirable it would be if those sins were not there. Even more, the Bible teaches that we should reckon the old man dead and thus ignore him. As far as our consciences are concerned, our feelings of guilt, the Bible says that the Lord purges our consciences (Hebrews 9:14). Not our flesh. He does not take away our sins in the sense that we no longer sin. We would like to eradicate the sins so that they no longer occur, but that simply does not happen. That is also not the intention. The intention is precisely that we live by grace, despite the sin that is in us.

It is about the objective observation that death is activated by sin, but that has been so since Genesis 3. Sin is activated by the law. The law is, so to speak, the hand that holds the goad and thereby activates sin.

Our redemption is therefore first and foremost a redemption from the law, then from the dominion of sin, but also from the dominion of death. We may perhaps die physically, but we shall not see death. We shall not see death, even if we have died. In that sense we are delivered from death.

Death in practice is to be loosed from the limitations of the flesh. Paul says that to be loosed and to be with Christ is far better. As long as we are not loosed, we are still bound to this old body. We must therefore make do with this body in this life, but nevertheless even now with Christ. To be loosed and to be with Christ is better than to

be bound and to be with Christ. We do not go through life alone. He is with us even to the end of the age.

1 Corinthians 15.56

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

The victory and the dominion are gone.

1 Corinthians 15.57

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. It was: Grave, where is thy victory? Death has no victory any more, but is itself overcome.

Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Victory over what? Over law, sin, and death. God will not one day give us the victory, but He gives us that victory even now. That is actually still too weak an expression, for in Romans 8 it says that we are more than conquerors in Christ. We share in His victory. It was the intention that the Lord Jesus through death should destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage

Hebrews 2:14–15

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage).

That bondage is the bondage of death. Our whole life is to a high degree and almost exclusively a struggle against death. That is the fear of death.

Fear is rather inexplicable, but to fear is to take into account. To fear God does not mean that you are afraid of Him, but that you take Him into account and adjust to Him. Think of fire or electricity. Those are things you must fear. The more you know about them, the easier it becomes to handle them. To fear death is to know death and to take it more into account. You know how to resist it. That determines our life. Nevertheless, that is a form of bondage. Now that the Lord has gone through death and has risen, He has not only overcome death thereby, but also him that had the power of death, namely the devil. He makes use of death.

One generation comes and another goes. The generation that goes takes everything it has learned into the grave, so that the new generation must start completely anew. That is not entirely so, for there is some overlap, but in principle that is how it works. Read Ecclesiastes. There really is nothing new under the sun, only there is always a new generation for whom everything seems new. Every generation tries again to invent the wheel, gunpowder, and black thread. Moreover, everything we have learned is always called into question again by a new generation. That means that humanity does not acquire knowledge. People acquire knowledge, but by the time they have more or less acquired that knowledge, they die. A new generation sometimes does a bit better, but in many cases also a bit worse. What the previous generation had, the new generation loses again. The devil makes use of that. The same applies to the study of the Bible, but this holds for all branches of science. It always has to be different. People have always thought that, but is it so? Should we not put something else in its place? If that is your motive, you will not get far. It is rather naïve after so many thousands of years of history to think that you can invent something new, especially with regard to the imperishable

Word of God. You would do better to listen to the older ones. In general, people no longer have any interest in that. They may still read the Bible, but draw conclusions from it that often make no sense at all, simply because they no longer have the knowledge, or because they have other interests. That happens, and it happens in other branches of science too. That is why there is so much confusion in the world. Humanity is in practice incorrigible. There is nothing to develop. The generation passes away.

Nevertheless, we have the victory.

1 John 5:4

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Whoever believes that has a share in the water, the Spirit, the Word, and the blood. Whoever is in the Lord Jesus Christ is born again and has received new life and overcomes this world. A world that is perishable by nature and that absolutely passes away, but we do not. We remain, because the Lord remains, in us and we with Him. The future outworking of that will be that even the perishable in us, with everything that belongs to it, will be changed in the resurrection of the flesh.

1 Corinthians 15.58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

This verse at first glance seems to have nothing to do with this chapter, though on second glance it has everything. It also brings us back to the theme of the epistle, namely to the horizontal and carnal mindset of the Corinthians, who simply do not realise that the life of the believer here on earth, as long as one is still in the flesh, is indeed determinative for the reward one will receive.

The truth is, in general, rather unknown. It has been explained as though man's labour ought to bring him to eternal life, so that he might one day die saved. Yet the Bible teaches that a man is saved by faith alone, without works. However, if you wish to receive reward, then indeed you will have to do something for it. In fact, all the epistles in the New Testament are about this very thing. They were written to believers. The message is that we, as children of God, have become His servants and have been made able to be ministers of the new covenant.

From this chapter it has become clear that there is indeed a bodily resurrection, and that this resurrection has everything to do with any reward we might receive. Paul returns to this at length in the following epistle, in chapters 3 to 5, although you will not find the terms rapture or change there. It states that we must all be manifested before the judgement seat of Christ. That obviously refers to precisely the same thing.

After Paul has spoken extensively about the resurrection of the flesh and its nature, and after he has spoken about the rapture of the Church—because it is not merely a resurrection, but a change for those who are already dead—he concludes the chapter with...1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Therefore, because of everything that has gone before. So then, it is thus that... It is a summary and concluding statement.

So then is more or less Paul's fixed expression.

Therefore, my beloved brethren — it is a loving exhortation, an encouragement. It has nothing to do with issuing a command, or ordering, let alone exercising lordship over the Corinthians.

Be ye steadfast = unmoveable.

Always abounding in the work of the Lord. Not always abounding in work in general, but in the work of the Lord. That is in fact only possible if you have some understanding of what the work of the Lord entails.

Forasmuch as ye know — in the consciousness that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. That labour is not for nothing. It serves a purpose. For ourselves, the purpose is that we might be clothed upon, or rather overclothed, namely that we might receive reward. These days that is almost a dirty word. We live in a society where the prevailing idea is that no one should receive wages any more, but everyone an allowance, and preferably all the same. It has not quite been fully implemented yet, but it is not far off. As far as we still receive wages, most of it goes to the taxman. Then you have to try to get it back again through everything that is subsidised in our country. That sounds cynical, but that is increasingly how things are.

Be that as it may, we ought to know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. The result of that labour is not that we receive eternal life, but rather that labour flows from the eternal life we have already received. That labour is part of the work of the Lord. For the Lord is doing a work, and we can be involved in it. Not because He needs it, but because we need it. In this verse we, as beloved brethren, are called to be always abounding in the work of the Lord. That work of the Lord primarily concerns the preaching of His Word.

God is Word, and when He works, He speaks. The work of the Lord therefore consists primarily of His Word. It is true that a great deal more is attached to it, but we ought always to abound in that work. It is not our work, but His work.

The Bible itself, the Word of God, also tells us what that work of the Lord consists of. For the Bible speaks of what God does. Insofar as we do not understand it, it also tells us why He does that work.

Some have brought the work of the Lord down to the level of it mainly consisting in His saving sinners. But why on earth would He do that? Because we human beings are so important. Nowadays it is said that we are allowed to exist. God also has high expectations of us. Well, if you think like that, you have not read your Bible properly. The Bible says that there is none that doeth good, they are all gone out of the way, and there is none that seeketh after God. Precious therefore in the eyes of God is the death of the sinner. God removes the sinner. He blots them out, definitively. That is to the glory of God. Unbelievers know all too well what is right in the eyes of the Lord, namely that they hope that unrighteousness will finally be removed from the earth. And God will do that. That is why it is also a serious message. We too belong to those unrighteous ones.

Fortunately the Bible also teaches that there is salvation, but then we must submit to Him and to His Word and allow ourselves to be taught by Him.

The tragedy is that man in general holds the truth in unrighteousness and sets his own theories against the Bible. Even worse, he inserts his own theories into the Bible. You just have to change the meaning of a word here and there, and then you can fit your own

theories in nicely. This whole epistle is a serious message to carnal and earthly-minded people who think it is all about themselves, about their rights here on earth. Yet you can think earthly thoughts, but whoever does so is an enemy of God. Be ye steadfast, it says. But where are we standing? If you are standing in the wrong place, it is better not to be steadfast. We stand in grace (Romans 5:2 — by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand) and we stand in liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free (Galatians 5:1 — Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage). We should not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

From what has Christ set us free? From the law. To what end? That we might serve Him in liberty, but not under the law. (Think of the slave who does not want to be set free at all, but wants to remain serving his master voluntarily. That is possible, but it goes through the way of death and resurrection, or through the way of faith and conversion, which is expressed in the symbolism attached to it.) We are therefore expected to stand in grace, in what God has granted us and in what He grants us daily, for every day and every moment of our life is grace, because according to the old man we are reckoned dead. We have forfeited all our rights, because One died for all, therefore all died. The dead have no rights. They can lay claim to nothing, not even to unmerited favour. Insofar as we have been made alive in Christ, we are a new creature in Christ. We have done nothing for that, and therefore there is no merit in it either. And so we live every day out of the grace that God gives us. Out of grace He gives us responsibility, gifts, particularly in the body in which we have been placed and of which we have become part. In that we should remain.

Curiously enough, quite a few believers lose sight of what their position is. In doing so they often let go of the simplest biblical truths. We ought to live by grace, namely to walk pleasing to God. That does not mean we must walk according to the laws and rules He has given us, but as adults, knowing what the work of the Lord is. We ought to contribute to it of our own free will and thus bear responsibility in it. You will understand that the devil has an interest in teaching us doctrines that in practice take away our responsibilities. One such doctrine is that we should still live under the law, for then the responsibility lies with the Lawgiver. Then we no longer have to choose for ourselves what to do or not do, because we ask whether it is prescribed or not. Otherwise we make sure those rules come into being, for that is how it works in practice. Then everyone can stick to the little rules and we are no longer personally responsible. That is increasingly how British society is structured. If everyone just sticks to the rules, nothing goes wrong. If there is even the slightest suspicion that something is going wrong, the rules must be adjusted. Personal responsibility is no longer part of it. In church circles it has almost always been like that. Even in the days of the apostles they had to deal with this phenomenon. Even then people were placed under law, or under church rules or people who exercised power over believers. They then determined the position of the believers. That no longer has anything to do with the work of the Lord.

The Calvinistic doctrine of election is also such a teaching. It removes responsibility from man. Not only because the same teaching also says that believers should live under the law, but also whether you are saved or not. You can contribute nothing to it and therefore it is not your responsibility. That lies with God, for He chooses. That looks suspiciously like Islam, for there it works the same way. You cannot do anything about it anyway. If Allah wills it, it will be fine, and if he does not will it, it will still be fine.

Throughout the centuries you also encounter these teachings in Christianity. Sooner or later you run into them. That is why a warning is in place.

The Bible says that we ourselves are responsible for our salvation, for whether we are born again or not. Moreover, we ourselves are responsible for whether we receive reward or not. That responsibility lies with us. God has said how He does it and has set it before us. The choice is ours. Choose whom you will serve. Here is the gospel of Jesus Christ, who hath brought life and immortality to light and is become the author of eternal salvation. However, only to those who obey Him and therefore to all who believe in Him. Whether you want to believe something or not is your own choice. Do you stick to the Word of God, or do you listen to something else?

It is not more difficult than that. You will bear the consequences. Fortunately so, for that immediately gives our life meaning, content, purpose. What else would you do it for?

The Bible teaches that this life has no meaning in itself. Insofar as this life still has meaning, it is because we as believers and children of God in New Testament times go through life serving the Lord and will be rewarded for it. The labourer is worthy of his hire. He gives us the opportunity. Now do not say that this is far-fetched, for you find this on practically every page of the Bible, at least of the New Testament. God gives commands: Do this, or do that. Then you say you cannot, but God says it does not matter, for He ensures that you can, or He gives someone to help you. Or He Himself goes with you to help you. That is how things went then, and that is still how they go in our time. It is therefore our responsibility to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called (Ephesians 4:1 — I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called). Not for show, but simply to the honour of the Lord.

We ought to stand in grace and we ought to stand in liberty. In that grace and in that liberty we ought to serve God. Our service to Him involves labour. That labour should not be in vain. Because we are in Christ, our life is not empty, but our hands are filled to do something.

2 Thessalonians 2:15

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

Stand in the Bible always means stand firm.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Stand fast, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will comfort you (inwardly). The good work begins with the Word. We ought to keep that Word, because it has been entrusted to us. We ought to hold the truth, as it is called elsewhere.

2 Thessalonians 3:4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

Referring back to the traditions from 2:15. And will do = continue to do.

2 Thessalonians 3:5

And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Insofar as the Lord works in us, He does so through His Word. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for

correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Reproof = not refutation, but laying down again, repeatedly.

That is also about work, about practical things. Faith in itself means nothing. Of course you are born again, but what difference does that make in practice? It only makes a difference if it has consequences in your daily practical life. That because of your faith you once go right instead of left. That faith has effect because it changes your interests. That is living faith. That is what James speaks of when he says: Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works (James 2:18-20 — Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?).

Believing is a practical thing. Believing is trusting in what has been spoken or communicated. Faith is trusting in the thoughts and words of someone else. That is also how it is in the dictionary. In the Bible it is exactly the same. We believe what God has said. If we perhaps hold other views, thoughts or ideals, too bad; you had better throw them away immediately. That is called the contradiction of sinners (Hebrews 12:3 — For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds). The Lord endured them, and we too will have trouble with them. As far as we ourselves are concerned, we ought to put them away

The whole of Scripture is profitable, that the man of God may be perfect, namely thoroughly furnished unto all good works. One ought to be busy with those things. Those things are connected. Our knowledge of Scripture and our faith in Scripture determine whether we are able to serve the Lord. In the old creation and in the natural man it works exactly the same. Before you can do certain things at all, you must know something about them. That is a general principle: first think, then do. Moreover, if you have to do something, you should first know exactly what it is, how those things work and why it is useful. Especially if you have to choose yourself and bear the responsibility for the things you have to do.

Some people see the work and others see nothing at all. The more we come to know the Lord, especially from His Word, the more we also see work. It is tragic that many people get no further than that the Scripture is given by inspiration of God and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. They read it as though it says that Scripture is profitable because you can then have nice discussions about it. That is how we got stuck with the doctrine of the Trinity. At the Council of Nicaea in 325 there was an extensive discussion about it, after which a vote followed on the subject. By majority vote that doctrine was then established, and so we are still saddled with it. Of course that is not how it works. God is one, and He is the majority. He says that you must not follow a multitude to do evil.

The whole of Scripture is given by inspiration of God. So here it says that we are not dealing with something cobbled together by people about which we can differ in opinion. It is the incorruptible Word of God, which we may indeed read and even search, but then with the greatest respect. So do not get it into your head to want to find your own theories in it. You should listen and let yourself be taught and not draw premature conclusions. If that had always been the case throughout history, we would not now be saddled with all those different sects, denominations, religions, churches and so on.

You can object that the Bible is difficult, but we have the Holy Spirit, who is supposed to lead us into all truth. Does not the Lord open the Scriptures to us? If you never intended to walk in all that good work of 2 Timothy 3:17, then indeed the Bible will remain a closed book to you. That idea is entirely biblical, and you see it happening all around you. If you do not wish to submit to this service under the New Covenant, fine, then so be it—but then you have no need of the Bible at all. You may well be born again—that is quite possible—but you will be utterly unfit for every good work. These things arise from how you handle the Word. The devil is doing everything he can to take that Word away from us, or to twist it, to strip words of their meaning, and all such things besides.

2 Thessalonians 2:13

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

When was that beginning when God chose you to salvation? Insofar as God has chosen us to salvation, it has been since we came to faith, since we made our choice. No person is elected to salvation—except perhaps One. God has chosen Christ to salvation, and insofar as we are in Christ, we share in His election. It is therefore our own responsibility whether we are chosen or not. God has chosen Christ and made Him Head, the Firstborn of a new creation. Whoever is in Him shares in every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Such a one is then also chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. That is what the Bible says about it. But of course, you can withdraw from the Lord to your own destruction. Yet you can also choose to live by faith, to the saving of the soul. That is a choice.

We make a choice to believe the Word of God. By that we come to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is to say, God causes us to be born again and thereby gives us to Christ and gives us the life of Christ. We thereby become partakers of Him and are planted together with Him. Then we share in His election and in His grace, for Christ too was graced.

Since we have part in Christ, we share in that election of His. That is the beginning spoken of here in 2 Thessalonians 2, namely that God hath from the beginning chosen us to salvation. That salvation does not consist in receiving eternal life, for you already have that. That salvation consists in our walk of life also becoming saved. That is called the salvation of the soul. The biblical idea is that from the moment we come to faith, God is to do a work in us. That must lead to salvation of the soul and ultimately to salvation of the body. You must keep those two things distinct. You can read this verse with a Calvinistic doctrine of election in mind, but then you will no longer understand what it says. You must not have a Calvinistic doctrine of election in mind, but the Bible. If you then read this verse, there is no problem at all. You choose to come to faith on the basis of the preaching of the Word of God and the invitation that accompanies it. If you respond positively to that, you receive part in Christ. From that moment Christ does a work in us. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. According to Calvinistic doctrine, God began that work from the beginning, but according to the Bible, only when we came to faith. Perhaps you can stretch it a little to the moment when we began to seek the truth. Then the Truth made Himself known to us. Then we still had to choose. Nevertheless, in principle it is from the moment we came to faith. Since then God has been doing a work in us. He does no work on the world. The world lies outside it. It is reckoned dead. The call is to dead people to give heed to the Word of God:

Isaiah 55:3

Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

That salvation consists in sanctification of the Spirit. That is a spiritual sanctification. What is that? Belief of the truth. And that is what follows. The work that God does in us since we came to faith is to lead us into all the truth, so that we might understand the truth and so that the truth might make us free (John 8:32 — And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free). You can come to faith, but are you then free? Officially yes, but in practice no. In practice you only become free when you learn to understand the truth. Paul says:

Romans 8:2

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Elsewhere he says that we are free from the law of sin and death on the basis of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, but in Romans 8 he says that the law of the Spirit of life hath made him free from the law of sin and death. That simply means that as we learn to live under the New Covenant—not of the law, but of grace—and also actually learn that we are new creatures and are reckoned to serve the Lord in liberty, the Lord leads us in the truth so that we might thereby become free in practice and in practice serve Him and know how to do so. Not collectively, but individually, for obviously that is different for every believer.

That is the personal responsibility of every believer. You can really get angry about all those theories of people that remove all responsibility from man, for example by saying that you do not believe in chance. But the Bible does. Things do not come as they must come. Not at all! The responsibility lies with ourselves. If you want to make yourself unfit for the work of the Lord, then by all means occupy yourself with all sorts of wild human philosophies. That is guaranteed to work. Then you will naturally lose your Bible. Then you no longer know what election is, what sanctification is. Then you no longer even know what the truth is. That is how it happens, and that is what this is about.

Be ye steadfast. Hold fast to the simplest biblical principles. Man is dead and is eternally and therefore everlastingly lost, unless... unless in this life, while he still is, he makes the choice for the truth. That is a serious message. It means that as long as we are here we have the opportunity to make that choice. The Lord is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. That is why this dispensation lasts so long.

God has called us to salvation, namely to sanctification of the Spirit, namely to belief in the truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:14

Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These Thessalonians were believers, just like us, but the intention is that we should come to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we were meant to be glorified with Him and even to be manifested with Him in glory at His coming again. To what degree we shall be glorified depends on the degree to which we have given the Lord the opportunity to do His work in us. That is why it says: Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

That last part proves in practice to be of great importance, although of course you cannot skip the teaching in the Word of the Lord. Yet the Word of the Lord becomes merely academic if there is not also activity in the work of the Lord on the other side. That is perfectly logical. When you are involved in the work of the Lord, you will also want to know what that work involves, its nature, its purpose, and so on. Then you are involved in the service of the Lord, whom you will then also want to come to know. The other way round it can sometimes degenerate. Then the Bible becomes the subject of a completely theoretical and useless discussion. Reject foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they do gender strife's (2 Timothy 2:23). Do not occupy yourself with them. They are unprofitable and serve to nothing. That is theory, philosophy, as though we humans can come to the knowledge of God and His plan by our reasoning. That is utterly impossible. For God is not part of this creation and of a causal world. He stands above time and therefore also above cause and effect. The whole argument that because God is almighty and knows everything in advance, that He knows all variables and could therefore have done it differently, is nonsense. God is not the designer of a model railway. God stands above time. What that is like? No idea, for that is precisely the point. That is called the unknowable God.

That unknowable God, whose essence they cannot fathom in any way, because He is of a different order from us, makes certain things known to us. You would be wise to stay within the bounds of what God has said about it in His Word. There is reward for that too. Read the biblical history on that score. How many were there who heard the Word of God through the prophets along the way and yet said: Is there not another prophet who can teach us something? For this prophet does not please us. They did not listen to it and did not hold to it, with all the consequences. They tempt the Lord. It all began with that serpent in the garden: doubting God's Word. You cannot deal with the Word of God in a non-committal way and build theories about it and listen to all sorts of theories that are presented to us. You gain nothing from that. What you do gain from is what is in the Bible. Then you are usually finished much quicker and it is also usually much quicker to understand. At least, insofar as it is revealed to us. What can be understood is at any rate that God is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, that He gives blessing to those who submit to Him. It is also very well understood that God blots out His enemies. Fortunately so too, for you do not want to think of Him one day saying that Satan has been in the fire long enough and then pulling him out. Moreover, if that were possible, then fire would no longer be fire if you could come out unscathed after so much time.

People no longer have respect for the Word of God. All scripture is given by inspiration of God. Submit to that then and handle it with respect; seek His will in all sincerity. Whether your will is to be found in the Bible is neither here nor there. What matters is that God has revealed His will to us. He says: Do you want to join in? Fine. Do you not want to join in? It is not necessary. That sounds indifferent, but it is not. God loves the sinner and gives him the opportunity to become involved in His work. That does not alter the fact that He is not only a loving God, but also a righteous God and will bring a very hard and definitive judgement on the ungodly who reject Him. It is with that God that we have to do.

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

For that work of the Lord we have been born again and for that we shall receive reward. That is why it adds forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

The New Testament speaks extensively about good works. Good works are reckoned to be those works that the Lord Himself effects in us. Those works always have to do with the building up of the Church, for that is after all God's work in this present time. God is not doing a work on the world in this time. Indeed, this present time is characterised by the fact that God has let the world go and is hiding His face from the world. Therefore the work of the Lord is not manifest to the world. His work is for the building up of the Church. The Church is not only being gathered, but should also be made able to be involved in the revelation of His Kingdom at the coming again of Christ.

The Church is regarded as a people of kings and priests and will in the future be involved in the judgement over the world and therefore also in the rule of His Kingdom. We can perhaps still imagine something of that when it comes to the thousand years, but what it will be like after the Last Day escapes our perception. Almost nothing is said about it in the Bible, and if anything is said, it is so vague that we indeed cannot form an idea of it. That is because we then enter another world that surpasses our imagination but also escapes our imagination.

The same applies looking back to the past. Our biblical history begins with God's work in the seven days. We just learn that this was a work of re-creation. That is to say that there must have been something before that. We just know that there must also have been life there and that the devil was present in it too, but how it all fitted together and what exactly happened there, we do not know. We only know that from Genesis 1:2 we are dealing with a sinful world. We can speculate and philosophise about what came before, but that does not make much sense. The probable reason the Bible says nothing more about it is that it escapes our imagination anyway. We must be content with that. We are dealing with this world. About that it is told how it is, namely that the whole world lieth in wickedness. The god of this world is the devil. He is the one who in practice rules this world. How it came to be so and why it is as it is, we do not know. We cannot know either, because it is unimaginable to us. You may perhaps think something up about it, but you will not get away with it. The theories that exist about it do not hold water, because you are immediately called back by the Bible. You just have to accept that.

Back to the present work of Christ.

He said: Upon this rock I will build my church. That is also what the Lord is doing in our days.

In chapters 12 to 14 we dwelt at length on our position as members of the body of Christ. There it is said that we have responsibilities in that body. Outside it there is something, but that is the world with which the Lord does not concern Himself and with which we therefore should not concern ourselves either. Then you can stretch it and say that you have the impression that the Lord does occasionally do something in the world. That may very well be, but you do not learn that in the Bible. You can therefore never prove it. For example, that Luther found a Bible and began to read what was in it. He came to the conclusion that what was in it was, to put it mildly, rather at odds with the Christian tradition of his day. That the Lord gives such people is most certainly true. For

something like that has a place in the building up of His Church. That this work in Europe resulted in a complete revolution and changed the face of Europe for centuries is also true. But to think that that was Luther's purpose is precisely what the Bible does not teach. It was about believers having a Bible so that they would come to know the Bible. The Lord gives people for that. Not only Luther, for he was only one in a long series. Yet Lutheranism gained a firm foothold. Literally, but insofar as it became a political matter, it was of course not God's work. Insofar as it was a work for the building up of the Church and the preservation of God's Word, the Lord will undoubtedly have had a hand in it Himself.

God gives people in the Church to the Church. He also places us in the Church. That may not result in a world revolution, but why should it? We each have our own place and responsibility, but it always has to do with this living Word of God, for what He does, He does through His Word. In us individually, but also collectively as the Church. You might say that to those so-called managers of present-day Christian churches. It is all about one thing, and that is the Word. Everything else may be interesting or not, as the case may be, but that is not what it is about. Churches are emptying these days. For God that has no significance, for whether people are members of a church or regularly attend church gatherings—what does that matter? What matters is whether a person comes under the hearing of the Word of God. If that happens in a church, fine. Wherever it happens. What matters is that the Word of God is preached. Not the word of people who have an opinion about the Word of God, but the Word of God itself. That is the work of the Lord. Everything else flows from it, serves it, and is subordinate to it. All so-called Christian activities should have but one purpose: that it is about the Word of God, faith in it, knowledge of it, understanding of it—for that makes a person free and able to serve the Lord. Already now, but certainly also in the future. Ultimately that is what it is about. There is a great deal to learn here. That is why we are here. And it does indeed happen in practice too. The idea of good works is a biblical principle. Good works are works that flow from faith.

The first time good works are mentioned in the New Testament is in Matthew 5.

Matthew 5:13-16

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Ye are the salt of the earth;

Ye are the light of the world.

Salt in the Bible is a picture of the abiding Word of God. That is why salt also has a preserving effect. Salt also gives flavour; it makes things pleasant and thus worthwhile. We are the salt of the earth. For to us have been entrusted the words of God. It was entrusted to Judaism, but now to the Church. Therefore our speech should always be seasoned with salt.

Light is also an expression for the Word of God. That light must not be hidden, but must shine. You should let your light shine in such a way that people can see your good works. What then do those good works consist of? If you let your light shine, what do

people see? They see that you are letting the light shine. Good works are therefore letting the light shine. It is about the Word, the knowledge of the truth. The world holds the truth in unrighteousness, and insofar as we are anything on earth, we are bearers of light. To us have been given the words of God. We should hold forth the truth. Insofar as we have any function in the world, this is it.

Suppose someone somewhere in the world is seeking the truth: then the truth makes itself known, for the truth is Christ, and He reveals Himself. In practice this means that the Lord then sends someone who is seeking the truth across our path. Just as with the eunuch from Ethiopia. He was sitting in his chariot reading. It was still a long way home, and he had no idea what he was reading about. Yet he very much wanted to know. Then the Lord sent Philip across his path, so that the eunuch could ask questions and receive answers (Acts 8:26–40). That is how it works. Those people come across our path, or we across theirs. Therefore we should always be ready to give an answer of the hope that is in us. Peter does not even say that you must go out to preach, but that you must be ready. We are expected to speak of what fills our heart. That becomes difficult if the heart is not full. Therefore the heart should be full, and that is why we occupy ourselves with the Word. The Word of God, that is—not with our own ideas. The result of those good works is that the Father in heaven is glorified. You only understand that if you grasp that those good works consist in our letting our light shine, especially to those who ask for that light, who seek the truth. Wherever we do this, it results in the glorifying of the Father. Then they glorify God. Then they receive answers to their questions and know to whom they must turn.

That is also the essence of good works: those works by which God is glorified. When light and salt are ministered, God is glorified.

The last time good works are mentioned in the Bible is in

1 Peter 2.1 Peter 2:12

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Honest here means honourable. Keep your conduct honourable.

Here again it says that through those good works God should be glorified. The intention is that the Gentiles should see those good works in us, with the result that they may glorify God in the day of visitation. What that day of visitation involves is somewhat unclear. In the Old Testament the term visitation is at any rate used for the confrontation between God and man. God visits man. Not that He comes for coffee or anything like that, but that man is placed before a choice, or confronted with the results of his choice. In that case it is simply judgement. That will come one day.

The idea is that we should do those good works even though people speak evil of us. For that is how the devil operates. If we are faithful to the truth, the devil can do nothing against us, so he slanders us through other people. There is always something to be found about anyone to speak ill of. The Lord Jesus was called a glutton and a winebibber, John the Baptist a recluse. The Lord said you can never please them anyway; they will always slander you. There are always things they do not understand and can therefore speak evil about. That is what the devil does. He is the accuser of the brethren. Peter says that you should remain honourable and keep busy with those good works. That is at any rate to the glory of God.

Even when you read elsewhere about good works, they are not always immediately relatable to the preaching of the Word or giving testimony. Nevertheless, all good works have something to do with it in one way or another, because they have to do with the affairs in the Church, and the Church is responsible for upholding the word of God. In Ephesians 2 it says that we were dead in trespasses and sins, in which we walked according to the course of this world. Since then, however, we have been made alive with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenlies. Then it goes on...Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

We are not of this workmanship, but of another: a new creation. We have been made by Him and are therefore also subject to Him. Since we are in Christ, we are a new creature and share in His election and calling.

We have not been saved by works (verse 9), but we have been saved unto good works. We have been saved by grace, not of works, but unto good works.

Those works God has prepared—not this present age or the prince of the power of the air from verse 2. God has prepared those works, that we should walk in them. The purpose is an active life in the service of the Lord, for we are all servants of God.

Elsewhere it says that we are slaves of Christ. Paul says that even though we were by nature slaves here on earth, now we are the Lord's freedmen. Insofar as we were free here on earth, nevertheless we are servants of the Lord. It just depends on how you look at it. It is all relative. We have been freed from one thing to be bound to Another (Romans 7). We have been freed from the law of the husband to be bound to another, namely to Him who has risen from the dead. That is binding, and therefore binding. That is why it is called the New Covenant. In that we should bear responsibility—not take orders, but serve the Lord in liberty.

- 2 Corinthians 9:8

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

- Colossians 1:10

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

- 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

- 1 Timothy 3:1

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

- 1 Timothy 6:17-18

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

- 2 Timothy 2:19-21

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of

silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

- Titus 1:16

They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

- Titus 2:13-14

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

For this we have been born again: to be zealous of good works, to contribute to the function of the Church and to contribute to preserving the word of God, as keeper of the truth, in the midst of a world that holds the truth in unrighteousness.

In the future, after the rapture of the Church, the truth will be taught by the Church to the world. Already in the days of the tribulation, but also in the thousand years.

- Titus 3:1

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

No meddling with the world, but ready to every good work.

- Titus 3:8-11 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

Those who have believed in (or on) God = those who trust in what God has said. Whoever deviates from biblical teaching is a danger to the Church. His word will eat as doth a canker (2 Timothy 2:17). That is dangerous. Avoid such a person.

- Titus 3:14

And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.

The list is much longer, but we shall leave it at that here.

That is the work of the Lord. In that we stand, and in that we bear responsibility. For that we shall receive reward from God, for our labour is not in vain. Not only are we ourselves blessed by it and receive reward for it, but obviously it is also to the blessing of others, in general to the building up of the Church. That is also what motivates us. Because things do not come as they come, because it is not automatic, and we can neither add to nor take from it.

We should be actively involved in the present work of Christ. He says that the labourer is worthy of his hire and that He knows how to reward. That is why we occasionally also read about crowns that we shall receive. You should not take that too literally, but it

means that our work will be crowned. The crowning of our work is that we shall receive glory from the Lord, at the time of the rapture of the Church, or the change of our body, or our appearance before the judgement seat of Christ. To some that may sound threatening, but it should rather be an encouraging thought, because we are not here on earth for nothing, and we do not hope for His coming again for nothing. There is a reason for it. As long as we are here on earth, God wants to involve us in the work that, as long as He has not yet returned, He is doing here on earth. Those things are to the glory of God and to our glory. It is regarded as grace that God has delivered us from the slavery of the world—not least from religion and sin, of course. He has set us free so that we might use that freedom to serve Him, to the honour of His name, to His glory and to our glory. That is grace, and for that we thank Him.

The collection for the needy Christians in Jerusalem

1 Corinthians 16:1

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

It is rather amusing in itself that on the mission field a collection was organised for the mother church in Jerusalem. It was there that the events had taken place which provided the occasion and foundation for the preaching of the Gospel. Apparently the believers in Jerusalem had become needy. They had disposed of all their immovable property. It does not take much more than that to fall into poverty. In Acts 2 it is described how the birth of the Church began in a rather enthusiastic manner in Jerusalem, starting with 3000 believers on one day. After that more were added every day. They also did all sorts of things for one another to combat poverty among the believers. That did not really work, for during the period of Acts the church there nevertheless became impoverished. Beyond that we do not know much, except that over time believers left Jerusalem in large numbers. Believers were persecuted there, especially in the period before Paul came to conversion. Thus the believers were scattered, and the Gospel reached Samaria. The end of the matter is that the church in Jerusalem becomes poor.

Later, after writing this epistle, Paul actually visits Jerusalem. He announces that visit here. On that occasion he was arrested and eventually taken to Rome. Still later, in the year 70, Jerusalem was destroyed, and so in the end nothing remained of that whole church.

The church in Jerusalem did not have a particularly great reputation. That is almost certainly because people there had come to faith rather half-heartedly. They remained inclined to hold fast to Jewish ordinances. Curiously enough, people do that more and more in our own days as well.

Nevertheless, Paul felt responsible for the affairs in Jerusalem for several reasons. After all, he had persecuted the believers there and thus driven them away. On his missionary journeys he always took the initiative to collect money for the church in Jerusalem. Not for the spread of the Gospel or missionary work, but for the benefit of those in Jerusalem who had become impoverished.

Already in Acts 11 we read that Paul organises such a collection. It appears that he conducted this campaign for years.

Acts 11:29-30

Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

That was already quite early in Paul's history. His first missionary journey had not yet begun. Paul had his home in Antioch, and from there money was collected for the churches in Judaea.

In Acts 24, years later, Paul gives an account to the governor Felix. In that explanation he reports how he came to faith.

Acts 24:17

Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

As far as we know, these were not so much alms to the Jews, but to the believers from among the Jews. It is unlikely that Paul undertook any positive action for the sake of the Jews who held fast to Judaism.

In Romans 15 Paul says that although he hopes to come to Rome, he will first travel to Jerusalem.

Romans 15:24-28

Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

This makes it very likely that Paul, after being released from imprisonment in Rome, did indeed travel further to Spain, in accordance with the plans he had. Those things are no longer mentioned in the biblical record, of course.

The general idea is that Paul collected money for the church in Jerusalem. This seems a rather extended exposition on the subject, but here in

1 Corinthians 16 Paul also devotes several verses to it. Indeed, in 2 Corinthians he devotes two chapters to this matter. Chapters 8 and 9 are indeed two chapters, but there is only one heading over them: The collection for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. That is therefore a very extensive recommendation for the collection for the church in Jerusalem. In it, at any rate, it is also expressed that the believers among the Gentiles bear a certain responsibility for the Jews in general, but especially for the believers from among them.

He brings that forward in other ways as well. For example, he magnifies his ministry by provoking them to jealousy, in the hope of saving some of them. That means that the ministry of believers from among the Gentiles is primarily directed towards the Jews and naturally especially towards the believers from among the Jews. Of course, in the church there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, nor outside the church. At any rate not in relation to God. Nevertheless, the responsibilities regarding the Word of God have been taken from the Jews and entrusted to the Gentiles. Paul behaves as a Gentile and therefore considers himself responsible and thus launches an action in favour of the Jews in Jerusalem. He apparently devotes a great deal of attention to that.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

The sentence implies that they are not ignorant of the collections Paul organises. He has, so to speak, no news for the Corinthians, but gives instructions about something they already know about.

1 Corinthians 16:2

Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Why must it be on the first day of the week? It does not have to be, of course, but here it is suggested that they were apparently accustomed to gathering on the first day of the week. There are very few Scripture passages that point to that. The reason for that seems to be that we simply have no obligations for it. For it is not the intention that believers should esteem one day above another. Nevertheless, it is a good custom to gather on the first day of the week. Apparently that has been so since the resurrection of Christ, for afterwards we also find the disciples gathered on the first day of the week. The first day of the week is derived from both the sheaf of firstfruits and the firstfruits loaves from the Mosaic ordinances. Of both it is said that they must take place on the day after the sabbath. The first day of the week stands as a model for a new creation, a new beginning, a new covenant.

Lay by him in store — one reads that as though one had to put money aside at home, as though one had a little savings pot at home. That becomes rather difficult to maintain when it then says: that there be no gatherings when I come. In other words, they apparently gathered on the first day of the week, and that was also a good opportunity to collect for the church in Jerusalem. Thereby a store arose.

1 Corinthians 16:3

And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

The transfer apparently involved papers. Paul keeps the organisation to himself. Insofar as others were to bring the store, the money, to Jerusalem, Paul would send an accompanying letter stating that those people had indeed been sent by Paul and so forth.

Plans of Paul, recommendations, greetings

1 Corinthians 16:4

And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

Apparently it is the case that if the collection should indeed involve a considerable sum, Paul wants to take the opportunity to deliver it personally. In doing so he apparently draws some honour to himself for it. That probably has to do with the fact that he feels in debt to the Jews in Jerusalem, because he especially persecuted the church there and because he has the reputation of being anti-Jewish. That is indeed how it actually went. What is mentioned hereafter does not seem to have happened.

1 Corinthians 16:5

Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia;
Achaia and Macedonia together form Greece. Macedonia is the northern part of Greece and Achaia the southern part. Corinth lay roughly on the border.

1 Corinthians 16:6

And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

There was indeed extensive shipping in the Mediterranean, already from the days of the exodus from Egypt, but the conditions were generally such that no sailing took place in winter. Hence they wintered over. In Acts we encounter that a few times. In winter shipping simply came to a standstill.

1 Corinthians 16:7

For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.

Paul wanted to travel to Corinth, but then to stay there for a longer time. Nevertheless...

1 Corinthians 16:8

But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.

Ephesus is in Asia Minor. Apparently he wrote this epistle from there. That also tells us fairly certainly when he wrote this epistle and under what circumstances. That is not always equally clear.

We read in Acts that Paul visits Corinth. There he also encounters opposition.

Acts 18:2-4

And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

After that there is all sorts of trouble. Paul then travels to Ephesus.

Acts 18:18

And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

Aquila and Priscilla came from Rome, but were driven out of that city by the emperor Claudius. They then went to live in Corinth. When Paul arrived there, he stayed with them, and when he left again, he took Aquila and Priscilla with him and came to Ephesus.

Acts 18:19

And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

Apparently Paul wrote the epistle to the Corinthians from Ephesus. That is why he also sends them greetings from Aquila and Priscilla, who were with him in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:19).

Paul plans to remain in Ephesus until Pentecost. When we then read the second epistle to the Corinthians, it becomes clear from it that he did not visit the Corinthians as planned. His journey took a different course, which gave the Corinthians occasion to regard Paul as unreliable. They were clearly looking for a stick with which to beat Paul. That was of course because they did not accept his message, as we have already seen in the first epistle to the Corinthians. In the second epistle that is even more strongly the case. Presumably he was never again in Corinth. The Lord did not require it, for there was no honour to be gained there anyway. If believers are not willing to serve the Lord, why should He send someone to teach, comfort, and admonish them? Nevertheless, Paul remains in Ephesus.

1 Corinthians 16:9

For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

On the one hand positive, and on the other hand negative. Both things are apparently reason for Paul to prolong his stay in Ephesus.

1 Corinthians 16:10

Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do.

Paul sends Timothy to Corinth, because he works the work of the Lord just as Paul does. He asks them to treat him properly.

1 Corinthians 16:11

Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.

He does not send Timothy alone, but also...

1 Corinthians 16:12

As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

Doctrinally, little can be concluded from these verses. Moreover, they are historical details that seem to have no significance. Nevertheless, they do seem to mean something.

13Paul demonstrates here that he did indeed feel responsibility for believers wherever they were in the world, but especially for those local churches that had arisen through his preaching of the Gospel. In the second epistle to the Corinthians he says that the care of all the churches comes upon him daily. You cannot simply reason that away by saying that one should be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make requests known unto God. So that Paul would have no reason to be anxious, for the Lord surely does His work! Of course the Lord does His work, but on the other hand it is equally true that He uses personnel for His work. For we are reckoned to have become servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. In that we are under the leadership of the High Priest of the New Covenant. Under that responsibility we have a priestly ministry.

Usually we approach it from another angle, in which in the church, for a financial remuneration, certain matters are entrusted to a few figures who are then reckoned to have their daily task in them. They are hired, called, dismissed, or retire. On the other hand, we also have to do with believers who think that such a thing is utterly unbiblical. They recognise no one at all, because they believe that each is responsible for himself. That can also be well proved, for we are indeed primarily responsible for our own life. That does not alter the fact that according to biblical standards, speaking very generally, God has given organs to, or in, the body, whereby certain believers have simply received certain responsibilities within the church, such as that of elder, or teacher, for example. Within the assembly of believers no offices are recognised, and therefore there are no preachers either. Everyone may serve with the Word, as it is solemnly called. Those who are most free in spirit naturally always take the lead. For the things that happen behind the scenes, whoever has the biggest mouth or the most money gets his way. If office is not recognised, then simply the law of the strongest applies. It is a nice ideal that someone has thought up, but it is not the biblical ideal to pursue.

1 Timothy 3:1

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

The office of overseer or bishop is indeed a function within the church. It means at any rate that one has it and another does not. That applies equally to other responsibilities. We as believers are all members of the body of Christ, but each one has a gift in particular. There is therefore difference, and you notice it here.

Paul bears the responsibility, or has taken it upon himself, or has received that responsibility for those churches, but apparently he is also in the position to send Timothy and to ask Apollos whether he would please come to Corinth. On occasion he has Titus with him and leaves Crete himself, leaving Titus behind to continue the work there at least for some time. People travelled with him, and he could send people on a message. He had a whole organisation around him, actually exactly as later for centuries the political rulers in Europe functioned. Charles V also travelled with a whole entourage. He would then be in a certain city for a while and arrange all sorts of matters there. When everything was in order again, he moved on to the next city. So he travelled around, and that is how those rulers all did it. Paul did the same. He had people with him and now and then sent someone out to do a certain job for him. When Paul was finished somewhere, he travelled on to another place. So you do indeed find a form of organisation. That was a form of leadership.

On the other hand it was also reasonably non-committal, for Apollos did not immediately accede to Paul's wishes. Later perhaps, when it suited him better. It will be clear that Paul was concerned about the Corinthians, but instead of writing that they should search the Scriptures to come to the knowledge of the Word of God, he sends people and also says that he is sending them. At any rate, the Lord gives some a certain function in the church. To think that you do not need that and can study your Bible jointly with a little group and then it will be all right does not work like that. It may be a nice idea, but it simply does not work. It does not work in ordinary education either. Nowadays frontal teaching is no longer allowed. There is no longer a teacher standing in front of the class explaining how things are. The pupils must discover that for themselves. They are given the textbooks and must get on with it. Education in the Netherlands has therefore declined very sharply. You simply cannot admit every few

years that you got it wrong. For that you first have to let a whole generation pass, after which a new generation can reinvent the wheel.

Education is by definition someone pointing things out. Instruction is someone giving direction. If that does not happen, things do not go well. The idea that someone with his Bible in hand, studying, can understand what it means is rather naïve. Education has always been a matter of transmission. That this does not happen apart from the Bible is logical. There are things that are fixed and have proved their value. Those are passed on, or handed down. That is how those things work. In the church, among believers, it works exactly the same. You find that in the Bible too. Moreover, it is in accordance with church tradition. The problem with that, however, is that different objectives are pursued there. In general people have not been interested in the truth and have always sought to keep the truth hidden from the people. That is done in the world, but in religious circles just as much. That is why there have been so many secret societies from of old. We know they exist, but what happens inside them is secret and not intended for everyone. If you ask why not, they say that otherwise it would be abused. Whether they are right or not does not matter; whether they are arrogant or not does not matter, but that is how it works, even today. Believers should come to the knowledge of the truth. For that the Lord sends people who provide the instruction in it.

There is therefore organisation. Not that the Corinthians were pleased about that. They also had their preferences and chose someone themselves. They understood the idea that there was a teaching and that that teaching had to be taught, but they preferred to choose someone themselves, with the result that they were rather limited in their knowledge. Moreover, with the result that they were very strongly focused on outward things. The Corinthians will have thought that teaching is good, but that it should especially be practical. And if it has to be practical, then it is especially horizontal. That is usually what it comes down to, at least.

It is very practical when we know what our position is and our ministry is and will be. Those are generally heavenly things, which for some reason are not considered practical. But that is precisely the problem with those Corinthians. Paul moves heaven and earth to provide the Corinthians with good teaching, but his relationship with them ends rather badly. The second epistle to the Corinthians is rather tedious in places, when Paul relates that he was going to come to Corinth but did not, or that he perhaps did come after all. We do not know quite for sure, and that he perhaps also sent a third epistle, one between the first and the second. It all goes very laboriously. After that he no longer even speaks of I this and I that, but of I know a man, by which he means himself. He speaks of unspeakable things being revealed to him, but he has a thorn in the flesh and prayed to the Lord three times about it. A lot of fuss altogether, but it ultimately comes down to the fact that he planned three times to visit the Corinthians. He dreaded it terribly, but apparently the Lord had told him he did not need to go. It may be your responsibility, but do not go there, for it serves no purpose anyway. That is the drift of the last chapters of these epistles. You certainly get an impression of what Paul had to endure in his ministry.

It would be rather strange if that ministry had not existed at all, because believers individually in their quiet time and communion with the Lord and their little Bible open and perhaps a word for every day would thereby come to the knowledge of the truth. That is not how it works; not in the world, nor in the church. In both cases it holds that if we want to take our place in society or in the church, we must know that place and also

submit to it, in the sense that there are others who know better than I do. We take our place, and everything in this world knows a hierarchy. One has people above him and another below him. We have people above us and we have people below us, also in the church. That is why John speaks of the fathers and the children. Then he is not speaking of families, but of brothers and sisters. He addresses them separately. Those differences simply exist. There is therefore indeed responsibility with certain people. That is so because in general believers do not manage without someone above them. Moreover, we have a Lord above us, and Him we should learn to serve. We all have to learn to serve. Everyone knows that if you are called to rule in the world, the best thing is to learn to serve first, to know what it is like to be subject. Then you know what it is like on the shop floor. If you know how things are there and how the relationships are there, then perhaps you are also able to give leadership somewhere. That is what we call making a career, although that term nowadays mainly means scraping together as much money as possible. Making a career is rising higher and bearing responsibility with everything that goes with it. That applies to us as believers just as much.

1 Corinthians 16:13

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

This verse connects with the last verse of chapter 15. It is on Paul's heart that those Corinthians should be faithful and stand fast in the faith.

Quit you like men somewhat jars with the thought that the church is a bride, or the Bride. As a bride it is difficult to act manly and is in any case irreconcilable with it. The church should grow up to manly maturity. If you act manly, you are not primarily led by emotions. The Corinthians were, for that is simply how it works horizontally. One should be led by the Word, in which one believes and on which one trusts.

1 Corinthians 16:14

Let all your things be done with charity.

In the consciousness of being joined to one another. That is one of the themes of this epistle. The Corinthians were characterised by divisions.

This verse obviously also connects with chapter 13.

1 Corinthians 16:15

I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)

Stephanas was the first in Achaia to come to faith.

His household had devoted themselves to the service of the saints. Of them it is said...

1 Corinthians 16:16

That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.

They have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. If you stand in the service of, then you are subordinate. Stephanas and his house are therefore subordinate to the church, but to the church it is written that they should submit to them. Rank order therefore. Insofar as you are active in the work of the Lord, you fulfil the function of leader. Then you go ahead. The intention is that believers in general should follow them. In other words, the shepherd leads the flock. In Hebrews 13:17 it says that you should

obey and submit to the leaders. 1 Corinthians 16:17 I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.

1 Corinthians 16:18

For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

Stephanas = crowned.

Fortunatus = fortunate, the lucky one.

Achaicus = of Achaia.

You do not find them again elsewhere in the Bible. Apparently they came from Corinth and had visited Paul. It may be that Stephanas is the same as in 1 Corinthians 1:16.

Those who labour in the work of the Lord you should also acknowledge as such. God Himself sent His Son, and the intention was that the Jews, from whose stem He came, should acknowledge Him.

We too are expected to acknowledge the Lord Jesus as the One sent from God. If you do not do that, then everything becomes one great chaos. Look at present-day society.

Human government is an institution given by God. Even if they make a mess of it, we should still be subject to them. Where government is not acknowledged, chaos arises.

Then there is nothing left to govern. There are quite a few countries in the world that are completely ungovernable and unmanageable.

Be that as it may, these three brothers had performed their service and thereby refreshed Paul's spirit, but also that of the Corinthians. They were representatives of the believers from Corinth. They were to be acknowledged by them.

1 Corinthians 16:19

The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

Written from Ephesus, a city in what is now western Turkey, which at that time was called Asia. Aquila and Priscilla had travelled with Paul from Corinth to Ephesus. The remarkable thing about Aquila and Priscilla is that wherever they lived, they always had a house church. The idea of church buildings came much later, when the church itself became an institution. The idea is that where there is a church, gatherings should also be organised there. For the church is expected to come together. Someone arranged that, and that was therefore his responsibility.

In Acts 19 Paul returns to Ephesus after first travelling to Jerusalem. He then stays there for a couple of years. When he is no longer welcome in the synagogue, he moves with the whole company to the premises next door, to the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9).

Paul chooses a place and then speaks there every day. That is his responsibility, and he took it very seriously.

Aquila and Priscilla were themselves evidently well instructed in the Scriptures and probably quite capable of giving Bible studies on their own. At any rate, they instructed Apollos further in New Testament truth.

In Romans 16:3 we find Aquila and Priscilla in Rome. Whether this was before or after Ephesus is difficult to say. There too they had gatherings in their house.

1 Corinthians 16:20

All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.

Paul probably does not mean all the believers in Ephesus here, but all his fellow workers. He quite often uses the word brethren in that way. Sometimes it refers to all brothers, but often it is a designation for Paul's immediate co-workers.

The holy kiss—it could just as well have been a handshake, for that is how we do it. They are symbols of fellowship, of mutual union. Apparently kissing was quite normal in that culture at the time, but of course a holy kiss was not. That is what this is about, naturally. We have been sanctified in Christ Jesus and thereby set apart for His service. We are at the very least His possession. From that arises our fellowship, which is expressed not merely in a kiss, but in a holy kiss.

1 Corinthians 16:21

The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand.

The epistle was evidently written down by someone else. The letter was dictated. Paul was no longer one of the youngest. It may be that his eyesight had deteriorated so much by then that he himself was no longer able to write. So others wrote his letter. How then do we know for certain that the letter was nevertheless from Paul? By his personal signature.

Normally, a person's handwriting is the best proof that a letter was actually written by that person. In this digital age that no longer applies so much. Business letters could be typed, with a signature underneath, but personal letters were always handwritten. Nowadays you read all sorts of things on the internet and do not know who wrote them, because people often no longer put their name to it. They use pseudonyms. That is contrary to good morals. Apparently they have something to hide, or are ashamed of what they write, or are afraid of something. When it comes to the Gospel, I am not ashamed of the gospel.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:2 it is even suggested that a letter was circulating, signed by Paul, but not written by him at all.

1 Corinthians 16:22

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.

Loving implies serving. Loving in practice is serving. Loving is a very practical concept. It is not merely about emotions, but about practical life. It always involves service. One serves the one whom one loves.

Whoever does not serve the Lord Jesus is accursed.

Anathema = accursed = a judgement is pronounced over such a one. That is a definitive judgement, in connection with condemnation and disappearance.

A believer is born again. That cannot be undone. No one shall pluck them out of His hand, and no one shall pluck them out of His Father's hand. Nothing and no one can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. That is indeed denied on a large scale in our days, but it could hardly be stated more clearly than above.

Nevertheless, there are quite a few Scripture passages that speak of a judgement that will come upon the practical life of the believer. In that you do not lose your life, but you can lose everything else you might have had. The works of believers will be tried by fire. Then it will become clear whether he built with wood, hay, or stubble, or with gold, silver, and precious stones. But he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire. For some that is a reason to be glad, for others not at all. On occasion you even read that it is a

fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31), for our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29). Those things are said to believers. That no one be a fornicator like Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright, who found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears (Hebrews 12:16-17). If you do not even know what the birthright involves, then you do not care if you lose it either.

Eventually you will find out, and what you therefore had. You can lose it, or, as Esau did, trade it for a bowl of soup. The Bible teaches that that is not wise. Quite a few people say they are a child of God and that is enough for them. They are very modest and say that if they just get a small place in heaven, they will be quite content. You will find out about that later. You will regret it your whole eternal life long. Moreover, you will be marked. Everyone can see it on you. The reward we shall receive expresses itself in the glory of our body. That is the curse this is about.

Whoever does not love the Lord Jesus in the practice of life, let him be Anathema.

Maran-atha = not Greek. That is why the translators left it as it is. It is an Aramaic word.

No idea why this word was suddenly written in Aramaic.

Maran-atha = Our Lord comes.

Aramaic was the everyday language in those days. The Lord Jesus occasionally also uses Aramaic words. Cephas is Aramaic for Peter.

It looks like a literary form: anathema, maran-atha = accursed, the Lord comes.

This is the only place in the Bible where this term occurs. From the context it is clear that the coming of the Lord is not such a pleasant thought here. It is a threat here.

Timothy is coming, and Paul had tried to send Apollos, but he is not coming for the time being. At any rate, the Lord is coming.

In the second epistle to the Corinthians Paul says that he indeed did not come. They reproach him for that, but they may be glad he did not come, for he would not have spared them, because when he comes, there will be trouble. Why? Because he can of course speak with authority.

At the end of this epistle Paul probably suspects that it will have no effect. That is also what the second epistle says. That is why you get a threat at the end of the epistle here. Paul himself planned to come, but as far as is known he was never there again. If he was there, he probably only collected the offering and then left immediately again. In doing so he did not even meet the church itself (see 2 Corinthians 2 for that). But whether Paul comes or not, the Lord certainly comes, and then there will be trouble. Whoever does not love the Lord and serves himself, let him be Anathema.

Stronger terms for such a curse do not exist. If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:9). Paul pronounces a curse there, but he pronounces just as much a curse on those who in practice do not serve the Lord: Anathema!

It almost seems like an outburst from Paul, for what follows is a very neutral closing of the epistle.

1 Corinthians 16:23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

1 Corinthians 16:24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

It is quite clear that he is not at the end of his story and does not have the idea that he has been able to set things right. If you simply continue reading into the second epistle to the Corinthians, you notice that too. That epistle is full of frustration. He has a message that he cannot get across to the Corinthians. He tries it again in the same way,

by speaking not only of the coming again of Christ, but especially of our being gathered unto Him, or better still, our manifestation before the judgement seat of Christ. Do not be mistaken: we as believers will be judged. Not over whether we go to heaven or not and receive eternal life; we have received that. All those who point out to us that this life here is determinative for our future are quite right. It does not determine our new birth or whether we go to heaven, but our reward. That is all the more important because it is once-for-all. There is no second chance afterwards, even though some have devised theories that there is still another possibility afterwards, both for believers and for unbelievers. Then we are quickly brought up to speed in heaven. We get a retraining course and so everything comes right in the end. On the other hand, people have invented that those who were unbelieving here will indeed be cast into the lake of fire, but that passes. Then they come out again and everything comes right after all. That is called the second chance.

However, for us believers there is no second chance, any more than for unbelievers. Some have an interest in such a second chance and therefore try to insert it into the Bible, but they are only busy raping the Word of God, for it is utterly impossible. The word anathema leaves nothing to be desired in clarity. Those terms have been extensively studied. Anathema = accursed, without hope of deliverance or improvement. If something is accursed, there is no hope left. That is the content of the term. So do not imagine that you can withdraw from the Lord here and that it will make no difference for eternity. On the contrary! Life in this world is determinative for the next. That is also the meaning of our life here on earth. Irreverently put, there is a selection for who goes through to the next round. That is only the believers. They enter the new creation. The others disappear. The position of those who will live in the new creation is likewise determined by their life and mind here in this old creation. People who do not want a master over them, who do not want to serve at all, who do not want to serve God—for them there is no place in this new creation. If there is any place for them, it is at the bottom. There too there is rank order, but we have spoken extensively about that in the discussion of chapter 15. Not all those glorified bodies are equally glorious. One is overclothed, another is clothed, and another is naked. How we are to imagine that we do not know, but the meaning is clear enough. At any rate, it is visible on the outside.

1 Corinthians 16:23

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

In that concept of grace is included the gift and the responsibility we have received in this life as believers here on earth. We should live out of that.

1 Corinthians 16:24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

There is no reason to doubt Paul's love. The only reason Paul wrote such long epistles to the Corinthians is that he cared for them and loved them. He would gladly serve them, because he was anxious about them. It lay on his heart. Not only because it was his commission, but also because he was emotionally involved. In the last part of the second epistle he does say that this is actually foolish. The Corinthians must bear with him that he is so foolish. Nevertheless, that union is there.

Amen. The epistle is ended, but is it finished? It ends rather negatively.

It remains a tragic story that although one is delivered from the slavery of this world, of death and law, that one not only receives part in God but also in His calling and sonship and is reckoned to be a royal and priestly people, with the corresponding functions, yet one pays no attention to it and simply goes on living on earth as if nothing is the matter.

As if one has not been bought with a price and as if it was not the intention that God should be glorified in our bodies.

We should therefore be conscious that we are not focused on earthly things, but should live out of the grace that God gives. That is not only grace with regard to forgiveness of sins, but the grace that makes us able to be ministers of the New Covenant. This is in fact the introduction to the second epistle to the Corinthians. We should live from that certain future expectation, that we shall be manifested before the judgement seat of Christ, that we look for the rapture of the church and look for the reward we shall receive. You can only look forward to that positively if you serve the Lord here and now.